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PAINTING IN THE CATACOMBS—CENTURY II OR III—THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN THE CENTRE. ON THE LEFT DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS, ON THE RIGHT THE THREE CHILDREN IN THE FURNACE

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS IN ROME

BY THE VERY REV.

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TO

EDGAR SUMNER GIBSON, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER

A GREAT SCHOLAR AND A WARM FRIEND

232709

PREFACE

OF the five Books which make up this work, the *First Book* relates generally the history of the fortunes of the Church in Rome in the first days.

The foundation stories of the Roman congregations were laid largely by the Apostles Peter and Paul—Peter, so with one accord say the earliest contemporary writers,[1] being the first apostle who preached in Rome. Paul, who taught many years later in the Capital, was also reckoned as a founder of the Roman Church ; for his teaching, especially his Christology, supplemented and explained in detail the teaching of S. Peter and the early founders.

The First Book relates how, after the great fire of Rome in the days of Nero, the Christians came into prominence, but apparently were looked on for a considerable period as a sect of dissenting Jews.

From A.D. 64 and onwards they were evidently regarded as enemies of the State, and were perpetually harassed and persecuted. No real period of " quietness " was again enjoyed by them until the famous edict of Constantine the Great, A.D. 313, had been issued. Although, through the favour of the reigning Emperor, a temporary suspension of the stern law of the State, sometimes lasting for several years, left the Christian sect for a time, comparatively speaking, at peace.

The Persecutions, which began in the days of Nero, with varying severity continued all through the reigns of the Flavians (Vespasian, Titus, Domitian).

[1] These are quoted on pp. 13–20 of Book I.

Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, only reigned two years, and was followed by the great Trajan : still the persecution of the sect continued. This we learn from Pliny's letter to Trajan, *circa* A.D. 111–113. Hadrian, who followed Trajan, virtually pursued the same policy.

In the latter years of Hadrian, from A.D. 134–5, the result of the great Jewish rebellion definitely and for ever separated, in the eyes of the government, the Christian from the Jew. Henceforth the Jew generally pursued his quiet way, and found new ideals, new hopes. The State feared the Jew no longer.

Not so the Christian. Rome saw clearly now that a new and influential sect had arisen in their midst ; a sect absolutely opposed to the old Roman sacred traditions and worship, a sect, too, that evidently possessed some mighty secret power which enabled the Christians fearlessly to defy the magistracy of the Empire. This partly accounts for the greater severity of the persecution under the Antonine Emperors.

The policy of the Antonines (Pius and Marcus), which endeavoured to restore and to give fresh life to the old Roman traditions and worship, which they looked upon as indissolubly bound up with the greatness and power of Rome, was absolutely hostile to the spirit of Christian thought and teaching.

The *First Book* brings the history down to A.D. 180, the date of the death of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

The " Inner Life " of the Christian congregations is now dwelt on, and forms the subject-matter of Books II., III., IV.

The subject-matter of the *Second Book* is the *everyday life* of the Christian in the first, second, and third centuries, during which period the religion of Jesus of Nazareth was in the eyes of the Roman government an unlawful cult, and its adherents were ever liable to the severest punishment, such as confiscation of their goods, rigorous imprisonment, torture, and even death.

After dwelling on the question of the numbers of Christians in very early times, their public *assemblies* or meetings together are described with considerable detail in Book II. The importance of these " meetings " in early Christian life is dwelt upon. *What took place at these gatherings* is commented upon at considerable length. The position occupied by the *slave* at these " meetings," and in Christian society generally, is examined briefly.

Some of the various difficulties which Christians in the age of persecution had to face, and the way by which these difficulties were combated, are described.

Instruction as to the way of meeting the difficulty of life for a Christian living in pagan Rome, was given by two different schools of thought. A sketch is given of (1) " Rigourists," and (2) of the " gentler and more practical " schools which strove to accommodate the Christian life with the life of the ordinary Roman citizen.

The important part played by the " Rigourist " or ascetic school in the ultimate conversion of the Roman World to Christianity is examined.

Finally, some of the inducements are indicated which persuaded the Christian of the first three centuries to endure with brave patience the hard and dangerous life which was ever the earthly lot of the followers of Jesus.

The *Third Book* treats especially of the hard and painful nature of the " life " which, from A.D. 64, was the lot of the Christian in the Roman Empire. For the members of the community ever lived under the dark shadow of persecution. The severity of the persecution varied from time to time, but the dark shadow lay on them, and constantly brooded over all their works and days. We possess no direct detailed history of this state of things, but all the early contemporary writings of Christians, a good many of which, whole or in fragments, have come down to us, are literally honeycombed with notices bearing on this perpetual apprehension; and indeed so real, so

constant was the danger, and so grave were the consequences to Christianity of any flinching in the hour of trial, that among the congregations of the first days, numerous schools existed for the purpose of training men and women to endure the sufferings of martyrdom.

The number of martyrs in these early years has been probably understated. Pagan contemporary writers of the highest authority, casually, but still definitely, allude to the great numbers of victims, while the tone of early Christian writings (already referred to) is deeply coloured with the pathetic memories of these blood-stained days.

Besides the references even of eminent pagan authorities and the perpetual allusions in early Christian writings to the great numbers of Martyrs and Confessors, a somewhat novel testimony to the vast number of martyrs is quoted here at some length from the history of the Catacombs, where the numbers of these Confessors are again and again dwelt on in the " handbooks " to the Roman subterranean cemeteries, compiled in the fifth and following centuries as " guides " for the crowds of pilgrims from foreign lands visiting Rome. These " Pilgrim-guides," several of which have in later years come to light, have been recently made the subject of careful study.

The *Fourth Book* is devoted exclusively to the story of the Roman Catacombs. In the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the vast subterranean City of the Dead, known as the Roman Catacombs, has been in parts patiently excavated, and carefully studied by eminent scholars. This study, which is still being actively pursued, has thrown much light upon the " life " lived among the early generations of Christians. The inscriptions and epitaphs graved and painted, the various symbols carved upon the countless tombs in the Catacombs, have told us very much of the relations between the rich and the poor. They have disclosed to us something of the secret of the intense faith of these early

believers on the " Name," and have shown us what was the sure and certain hope which inspired their wonderful endurance of pain and agony, and their marvellous courage in the hour of trial.

All this and much more the inscriptions on the thousand thousand graves, the dim fading pictures, the rough carvings, speak of in a language none can mistake. It is, indeed, a voice from the dead, bearing its strange, weird testimony which none can gainsay or doubt.

The work of excavation and the patient study of these Catacombs are yet slowly proceeding, but from what has been already discovered we have learned much of the " Inner Life " of this early Christian folk.

The history of these wonderful Catacombs, this subterranean city of the dead beneath the suburbs of ancient Rome, is told at some length and with considerable detail in the Fourth Book.

The *Fifth Book* may be considered as a supplement to the work, which in the first four Books has dwelt on (1) the very early history, and (2) on the " Inner Life " of the Christian Church in the first three centuries, especially in Rome.

Christianity sprang from the heart of the Chosen People, the Jews. The Divine Founder in His earthly life was pleased to be a Son of the Chosen People, and His disciples, who laid the early stories of the Faith, were all Jews, as were the earliest converts to the religion of Jesus.

The history of the Jews—their past and present condition—is indissolubly bound up with the records of Christianity. It constitutes the most important confirmation which we possess of the truth of early Christian history. It is the weightiest of all evidential arguments here, and it cannot be refuted or disproved.

The general account of the Chosen People before the coming of Messiah is well known, and the historical accuracy of the Old Testament records is generally admitted. But the

memories of the fortunes of the Jewish race after A.D. 70, when the Temple and City were destroyed, and when the heart of Judaism, as it were, ceased to beat, are comparatively little known.

The Fifth Book tells something of that eventful history. It sketches first, very briefly, the last fatal wars of the Jews. Then it tells how directly after the Temple was burnt a remarkable group of Rabbis arose, who, undismayed by what seemed the hopeless ruin of their race, at once proceeded to the reconstruction of Judaism upon totally new foundation stories.

These strange and wonderful scholars gathered together a mass of memories, traditions, and precepts which from the days of Moses had gradually been grouped round the sacred Torah,—the Law of the Lord,—and which had formed the subject-matter of the teaching of the Rabbinic schools of the Holy Law during the five centuries which had elapsed since the Return from the Captivity.

All these memories — traditions — comments, the great scholar Rabbis and their disciples arranged, codified, amplified. This work went on for some three hundred years or more; their labours resulted in the production of the Talmud.

The great object of this marvellous book, or rather collection of books, the Talmud, was the glorification of Israel; but no longer as a separate, a distinct nation, but what was far greater, as a separate People, a People specially beloved of God, for whom a glorious destiny was reserved in a remote future, a destiny which only belonged to the Jews.

In the several sections of this Fifth Book the Talmud is described :—the materials out of which it was composed, the method of the composition, the marvellous power which it exercised upon the sad Remnant of the Jewish people, how it bound them, exiles though they were in many lands, and kept them together,—all this is told at some length.

The ten or twelve millions of Jews, scattered through many hostile nations, living in the world of to-day, more powerful, more influential by far than they were in the golden age of David and Solomon, linked together by a bond which has never snapped, are indeed an ever-present evidence of the truth of the story of the early Christians dwelt on in the first four Books of this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BOOK I

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY IN ROME

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

PAGE

A sketch of the early Jewish colony in Rome—Allusion to Jews by Cicero—Favour shown them by Julius Cæsar—Mention of Jews by the great poets of the Augustine age—Characteristic features and moral power of Jews—Their numbers in the days of Nero 3

I

(*a*) FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IN ROME—INFLUENCE OF S. PETER

Into this colony of Jews came the news of the story of Jesus Christ—Was S. Peter among the first preachers of Christianity in Rome?—Quotations from early Christian writers on this subject—Traditional memories of S. Peter in Rome . 7

II

EARLY REFERENCES

Quotations from patristic writers of the first three centuries, bearing on the foundation of the Church in Rome, including the oldest Catalogues of the Bishops of Rome—Deduction from these quotations 13

PART II

I

(*b*) FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IN ROME—INFLUENCE OF S. PAUL

S. Paul in Rome—His share in laying the foundation stories in the Capital—Paul's Christology more detailed than that contained in S. Mark's Gospel, which represents S. Peter's teaching 21

II

POSITION OF CHRISTIANS AFTER A.D. 64

PAGE

The great fire of Rome in the days of Nero brought the unnoticed sect of Christians into prominence—The games of Nero—Never again after A.D. 64 did Christians enjoy "stillness"—The policy of the State towards them from this time was practically unaltered 25

III

THE VEILED SHADOW OF PERSECUTION—POLICY OF THE FLAVIAN EMPERORS

Silence respecting details of persecutions in pagan and in Christian writings—Reason for this—These writings contain little history; but the Christian writings are coloured with the daily expectation of death and suffering—In spite of persecution the numbers of Christians increased rapidly—What was the strange attraction of Christianity?—Persecution of the sect under the Flavian Emperors Vespasian, Titus, Domitian . 35

PART III

INTRODUCTORY

The correspondence between Trajan and Pliny, and the Imperial Rescript—Genuineness of this piece in Pliny's Letters 45

I

THE LETTERS OF PLINY

Nerva—Character of Trajan—Story of correspondence here referred to—Pliny's Letters—Reply of Trajan, which contained the famous Rescript—Tertullian's criticism of Rescript—Pliny's Letters—They were no ordinary letters, but were intended for public reading—Pliny's character—The vogue of writing letters as literary pieces for public reading—Pliny's Letters briefly examined—The letter here under special consideration—Its great importance in early Christian history 48

II

VOGUE OF EPISTOLARY FORM OF LITERATURE

Letters of public men considered as pieces of literature—After Trajan there were very few Latin writings until the close of the fourth century—In that period some celebrated letters again appear (written by Symmachus and by Sidonius Apollinaris a few years later)—These letters were evidently written as pieces of literature intended for public circulation . 63

III

THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES, AND LETTERS OF APOSTOLIC FATHERS

PAGE

Adoption of favourite letter-form as literary pieces—in Epistles of the New Testament, and in letters of Apostolic Fathers . 69

PART IV

I

(*a*) HADRIAN—HIS POLICY TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

Hadrian—His life of travel—His character—Early policy towards Christians—He insults Christianity in his building of Aelia Capitolina on site of Jerusalem—The great Jewish war—Its two results—(*a*) Complete change in the spirit of the Jews—(*b*) A new conception of the Christian sect on part of Roman Government—It was now recognized that the Christian was no mere Jewish dissenter, but a member of a distinct sect, dangerous to Roman policy 75

II

(*b*) HADRIAN—HIS ENMITY TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY GRADUALLY INCREASED

Last years of Hadrian—Persecution of Christians more pronounced—Undoubted authorities for this graver position of Christians throughout the Empire—Table showing succession of Antonines to the Empire 81

III

ANTONINUS PIUS AND MARCUS ANTONINUS—THEIR IDEALS

Character of Antoninus Pius—His intense love for Rome—His determination to restore the old simple life to which Rome owed her greatness—His devotion to ancient Roman traditions, and to the old Roman religion—Antoninus Pius and his successor Marcus lived themselves the simple austere life they taught to their court and subjects 84

IV

INTENSE ANTIPATHY OF THE ANTONINES TO CHRISTIANITY

Reason of the Antonines' marked hostility to the Christian sect—The Christians stood resolutely aloof from the ancient religion which these two great sovereigns believed was indissolubly bound up with the greatness of Rome—With such views of the sources of Roman power and prosperity, only a stern policy of persecution was possible—This policy, pursued in days of Pius, was intensified by his yet greater successor Marcus—The common idea that the Christians were

PAGE

tolerated in the days of the Antonines must be abandoned —Their sufferings under the rule of these great Emperors, especially in the days of Marcus, can scarcely be exaggerated 91

BOOK II

THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FAITH

INTRODUCTORY . . . 101

I

NUMBERS OF CHRISTIANS IN THE EARLY DAYS

Certain reasons to which the rapid acceptance of Christianity was owing—The great numbers of the early converts is borne witness to by pagan authors, such as Tacitus and Pliny, and by Christian contemporary writers such as Clement of Rome, Hermas, Irenæus, and others—The testimony of the Roman catacombs described in detail in Fourth Book is also referred to 102

II

THE ASSEMBLIES OF CHRISTIANS

These "assemblies" constituted a powerful factor in the acceptance and organization of the religion of Jesus—Their high importance is recognized by the great teachers of the first days—Quotations from these are given . . . 107

III

OF WHOM THESE PRIMITIVE "ASSEMBLIES" WERE COMPOSED

Information respecting these early meetings of Believers is supplied by leading Christian teachers—Quotations from these are given 110

IV

WHAT WAS TAUGHT AND DONE IN THESE "ASSEMBLIES"

A general picture of one of them by Justin Martyr—(*A*) Dogmatic teaching given in these meetings—(*B*) Almsgiving—Is shown to be an inescapable duty—Is pressed home by early masters of Christianity on the faithful—All offerings made were, however, purely voluntary—No communism was ever

PAGE

taught or hinted at in the early Church—(*C*) Special dogmatic instruction respecting the value of almsgiving was given by some early teachers—Several of these instructions are given here—(*D*) Apart from this somewhat strange dogmatic teaching on the value of almsgiving, the general duty of almsgiving was most strongly impressed on the faithful—Passages emphasizing this from very early writers are here quoted—(*E*) Special recipients of these alms are particularized; amongst these, in the first place, widows and orphans, and the sick, appear—(*F*) These alms in some cases were not to be confined to the Household of Faith—(*G*) Hospitality to strangers is enjoined—References here are given from several prominent early teachers — Help to prisoners for the Name's sake enjoined—Assistance to be given to poorer Churches is recommended—(*H*) Burial expenses for the dead among the poorer brethren are to be partly defrayed from the "alms" contributed at the assemblies, partly from private sources—Lactantius, in his summary of Christian duties, dwells markedly on this duty—Important witness of the Roman catacombs here . . 113

V

THE SLAVE IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE

Position in Christian society—How the slave was regarded in the "assemblies"—Paulinus of Nola quoted on the general Christian estimate of a slave—How this novel view of the slave was looked on by pagans 134

A general summary of the effect which all this teaching current in the primitive "assemblies" had on the policy and work of the Church in subsequent ages 137

VI

DIFFICULTIES IN ORDINARY LIFE AMONG THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

Difficulties in common life for the Christian who endeavoured to carry out the precepts and teaching given in the "assemblies" are sketched—In family life—In trades—In the amusements of the people—In civil employments—In the army—In matters of education—A general summary of such difficulties is quoted from De Broglie (*l'Église et l'Empire*) 140

PAGE

VII

THE ASCETIC AND THE MORE PRACTICAL SCHOOLS OF TEACHING

Two schools of teaching, showing how these difficulties were to be met, evidently existed in the early Church—(*A*) *The school of Rigourists*—Tertullian is a good example of a teacher of this school—Effect of this school on artisans—On popular amusements—On soldiers of the Legions—On slaves—On family life—From this stern school came the majority of the martyrs—(*B*) *The gentler and more practical school*—exemplified in such writings as the Dialogue of Minucius Felix and in writings of Clement of Alexandria, etc.—Results of the teaching of the *gentler school*—Art was still possible among Christians, although permeated with heathen symbols—The Christian might still continue to live in the Imperial court—might remain in the civil service—in the army, etc.—Examples for such allowances found in Old Testament writings—(*C*) The *Rigourist* school again dwelt on—Its great influence on the pagan empire—The final victory of Christianity was largely owing to the popular impression of the life and conduct of followers of this school—This impression was voiced by fourth century writers such as Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola, and is shown in the work of Pope Damasus in the catacombs . . 144

VIII

WHAT THE RELIGION OF JESUS OFFERED IN RETURN FOR THIS HARD LIFE TO RIGOURISTS, AND IN A SLIGHTLY LESS DEGREE TO ALL FOLLOWERS OF THE SECOND SCHOOL

(*A*) Freedom from ever-present fear of death—S. Paul, Ignatius, and especially epitaphs in the Roman catacombs are referred to here—(*B*) New terminology for death, burial, etc., used—(*C*) The ever-present consciousness of forgiveness of sins—(*D*) Hope of immediate bliss after death—The power of the revelation of S. John in early Christian life—(*E*) Was Christian life in the early centuries after all a dreary existence, as the pagans considered it? . . 153

BOOK III

THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHURCH

PART I

A.D. 64–A.D. 180

INTRODUCTORY

PAGE

The early Church remained continually under the veiled shadow of persecution—This state of things we learn, not from the "Acts of the Martyrs," which, save in a certain number of instances, are of questionable authority, but from fragments which have come down to us of contemporary writings—Extracts from two groups of the more important of these are quoted . 163

I

QUOTATIONS FROM APOSTLES, ETC.

First Group.—From writings of apostles and apostolic men, including the Epistle to the Hebrews—1 Peter—Revelation of S. John—First letter of S. Clement of Rome—The seven genuine letters of S. Ignatius 166

II

QUOTATIONS FROM WRITINGS OF THE SECOND CENTURY

Second Group.—Early writings, dating from the time of Trajan to the death of Marcus Antoninus (A.D. 180); including—"Letters of Pliny and Trajan"—"Letter to Diognetus"—"The Shepherd of Hermas"—"1st Apology of Justin Martyr"—"Minucius Felix"—"Writings of Melito of Sardis"—"Writings of Athenagoras"—"Writings of Theophilus of Antioch"—"Writings of Tertullian"—the last-named a very few years later, but bearing on same period . . 177

PART II

TRAINING FOR MARTYRDOM

INTRODUCTORY

The sight of the martyrs' endurance under suffering had a marked effect on the pagan population. This was noticed and dreaded by the Roman magistracy. Efforts were constantly made by the Government to arrest or at least to limit the number of martyrs 193

I

OF THE SPECIAL TRAINING FOR MARTYRDOM

PAGE

The Church conscious of the powerful effect of a public martyrdom upon the pagan crowds—established a training for—a preparation in view of a possible martyrdom—This training included: (*a*) A public recitation in the congregations of Christians of the "Acts," "Visions," and "Dreams" of confessors—(*b*) The preparation of special manuals prepared for the study of Christians—In these manuals our Lord's words were dwelt on—(*c*) A prolonged practice of austerities, with the view of hardening the body for the endurance of pain 197

II

QUOTATIONS FROM TERTULLIAN, ETC.

Certain of Tertullian's references to this preparation, and to the austerities practised with this view, are quoted. (His words, written *circa* A.D. 200, indicate what was in the second century a common practice in the Church.) S. Ignatius's words in his letter to the Roman Church are a good example of what was the use of the Church in the early years of the second century—Some of the words in question are quoted . 202

PART III

THE GREAT NUMBERS OF MARTYRS IN THE FIRST TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS

INTRODUCTORY

Christian tradition by no means exaggerates the number of martyrs—the contrary, indeed, is the case—In the first two hundred and fifty years the general tone of the early Christian writings (above quoted) dwells on those blood-stained days—But the great pagan authors of the second century, Tacitus and Pliny, are the most definite on the question of the vast number of martyrs—Here is cited a new piece of evidence concerning these great numbers from notices in the "Pilgrim Itineraries" or "Guides" to the catacombs of the sixth and following centuries—These tell us what the pilgrims visited—The vast numbers of martyrs in the different cemeteries again and again are dwelt upon . 207

I

List of the various cemeteries and their locality, with special notice of numbers of martyrs buried in each 210

II

SPECIAL REFERENCE IN THE "MONZA" PAPYRUS, ETC.

PAGE

The "Monza" Catalogue—made for Queen Theodolinda by Gregory the Great, with notices of number of martyrs from the catalogue in question—Inscriptions of Pope Damasus—References by the poet Prudentius on the number of martyrs . 214

III

DEDUCTIONS FROM THE "MONZA" CATALOGUE AND "PILGRIM" GUIDES

General summary, allowing for some exaggeration in the "Pilgrim" Guides and in the "Monza" Catalogue, on the great numbers of these confessors and martyrs 215

BOOK IV

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

The nature of the catacombs' witness to the secret of the "Inner Life" of the Church—A brief sketch of the contents of the Fourth Book 219

I

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS—THEIR PLACE IN ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

Early researches—Their disastrous character—De Rossi—His view of the importance of the testimony of the catacombs in early Christian history—Much that has been considered legendary is really historic—Witness of catacombs to the faith of the earliest Christians 223

II

DE ROSSI'S WAY OF WORKING IN HIS INVESTIGATIONS

Among the materials with which De Rossi worked may be cited: Acta Martyrum of S. Jerome, Liber Pontificalis, the "Pilgrim Itineraries," and the "Monza" Catalogue, which is specially described—Decoration of certain crypts—Basilica (ruins) above ground—Luminaria—Graffiti of pilgrims—Inscriptions of Pope Damasus *in situ*, and also preserved in ancient syllogæ 226

PAGE

Certain of his more important discoveries in the cemeteries of SS. Domitilla, Priscilla, Callistus—The yet later discoveries of Marucchi and others 230

III

GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE VASTNESS AND SITUATION OF THE CATACOMBS

(1) The Vatican cemetery and the groups of catacombs on the right bank of the Tiber 232

IV

(2) On the Via Ostiensis—Basilica of S. Paul—Cemeteries on the Via Ardeatina—Grandeur of cemetery of S. Domitilla—The small basilica of S. Petronilla 236

V

(3) Groups of cemeteries on the Via Appia—S. Sebastian (*ad Catacumbas*)—Group of S. Callistus—The Papal crypt—S. Soteris—Catacomb of Prætextatus on left hand of the Via Appia—Tomb of S. Januarius in this catacomb . 242

VI

(4) Cemeteries on the Via Latina and Via Tiburtina—S. Hippolytus—S. Laurence—S. Agnes' cemetery on the Via Nomentana 248

VII

(5) Cemeteries on the Via Salaria Nova—S. Felicitas; the great cemetery of S. Priscilla, and the ancient Roman churches connected with it—Legends—Remains of basilica of S. Sylvester over the cemetery of S. Priscilla—Memories of S. Peter in this cemetery—Its waters—Recent discoveries—Popes buried in the basilica of S. Sylvester . . 258

VIII

(6) Unimportant cemeteries on the Via Salaria Vetus—S. Pamphylus—S. Hermes—S. Valentinus, etc. . . . 274

APPENDIX I.—S. PETRONILLA

PAGE

Suggested derivation of Petronilla—De Rossi and other scholars still hold to the ancient Petrine tradition—Reasons for maintaining it—Early mediæval testimony here—Traces of the early cult of this Saint 277

APPENDIX II.—TOMB OF S. PETER

Probable situation of the tomb in present basilica of S. Peter—Account of what was found in the course of the excavations in the seventeenth century, by Ubaldi, Canon of S. Peter's, who was an eye-witness of the discoveries made in A.D. 1626, when the works required for the great bronze Baldachino of Bernini were being carried out 279

PART II

TWO EXAMPLES OF RECENT DISCOVERIES

I

THE CRYPT OF S. CECILIA

The old story of the famous Saint no longer a mere legend—Reconstruction of S. Cecilia's life—The crypt is described—Her basilica in the Trastevere quarter—once S. Cecilia's house 289

II

REMOVAL OF S. CECILIA TO HER BASILICA

Discovery of remains of S. Cecilia by Paschal I., A.D. 821—Appearance of the body, which he translated from the crypt in the catacomb of Callistus to her basilica—Her tomb in the basilica opened in A.D. 1599 by Clement VIII.—Appearance of the body—Maderno copied it in marble—How De Rossi discovered and identified in the original catacomb the crypt of S. Cecilia 292

III

THE TOMB OF S. FELICITAS, AND OF HER SONS

Discovery and identification of the burial-places of S. Felicitas, of S. Januarius, and of her other sons—Reconstruction of her story—Tomb of S. Januarius found in cemetery of Prætextatus on the Via Appia—Original tomb of S. Felicitas found in the cemetery bearing her name (Via Salaria Nova)—Identification of the burial-places of her other sons . . 298

PART III

TEACHING OF THE INSCRIPTIONS AND CARVINGS ON THE TOMBS

I

EPITAPHS IN THE CATACOMBS—THEIR SIMPLICITY

PAGE

Uncounted numbers of graves in this silent city of the dead; computed at three, four, or five millions—belonging to all ranks—Some of these were elaborately adorned—Greek often the language of very early epitaphs—Great simplicity as a rule in inscriptions—No panegyric of dead—just a name—a prayer—an emblem of faith and hope—Communion of saints everywhere asserted 307

II

EPITAPHS IN THE CATACOMBS CONTRASTED WITH PAGAN INSCRIPTIONS

A few of these epitaphs quoted—never a word of sorrow for the departed found in them—Question of the catacomb teaching on efficacy of prayers of the dead for the living—S. Cyprian quoted here—Desire of being interred close to a famous martyr—Marked difference in the pagan conception of the dead—Some pagan epitaphs quoted 310

III

EPITAPHS IN THE CATACOMBS—THEIR DOGMATIC TEACHING

The epitaphs on the catacomb graves tell us with no uncertain voice how intensely real among the Christian folk was the conviction of the future life—They talk, as it were, with the dead as with living ones—Dogmatic allusions in these short epitaphs necessarily are very brief, but yet are quite definite—The supreme divinity of Jesus Christ constantly asserted—The catacombs are full of Christ—Of the emblems carved on the graves—Jesus Christ as "the Good Shepherd" most frequent—The "Crucifixion" became a favourite subject of representation only in later years 314

APPENDIX

On the wish to be interred close to a saint or martyr—Quotation from S. Augustine here 321

BOOK V

THE JEW AND THE TALMUD

INTRODUCTORY

PAGE

The story of the Jew—his past—his condition now, is the weightiest argument that can be adduced in support of the truth of Christianity—What happened to the "sad remnant" of the people after the exterminating wars of Titus and Hadrian, A.D. 70 and 134–5, is little known; yet the wonderful story of the Jew, especially in the second and third centuries, is a piece of supreme importance—How Rabbinic study and the putting out of the Talmud have influenced the general estimate of the Old Testament among Christian peoples 325

I

THE LAST THREE GREAT WARS OF THE JEWS

The First War, A.D. 66–70—Revolt of the Jews—The dangerous revolt was eventually crushed by Vespasian, and when he succeeded to the Empire his son Titus completed the conquest—Fate of the city of Jerusalem, A.D. 70—Why was the Temple burned?—The recital of Sulpicius Severus gives the probable answer—The account in question was apparently quoted from a lost book of Tacitus—The Roman triumph of Titus—The memories of the conquered Jews on the Arch of Titus in the Forum—The great change in Judaism after A.D. 70, when the Temple and city were destroyed—The change was completed after the war of Hadrian in A.D. 134–5 (the third war)—Brief account of the *second and third wars*—The bitter persecution after the third war soon ceased, and the sad Jewish remnant was left virtually to itself 329

II

RABBINISM (*a*)

The conservation of the remnant of the Jews was owing to the development of Rabbinism—Rabbinism, however, existed before A.D. 70—Traditional story of the rise of Rabbinism contained in the "Mishnah" treatise Pirke Aboth—Effect of the great catastrophe of A.D. 70—Mosaism was destroyed, and was replaced by Rabbinism . . . 338

III

RABBINISM (*b*)

PAGE

Extraordinary group of eminent Rabbis who arose after the catastrophe of A.D. 70—Their new conception of the future of Israel—The Torah (Law of Moses) and other writings of the Old Testament from the days of Ezra had been esteemed ever more and more highly—The "Halachah" or (Rules round the Torah) gradually multiplied—The elaboration of these "Halachah" and "Haggadah" (traditions) formed the "Mishnah"—this work roughly occupied the new Jewish schools during the whole of the second century—Explanation of term "Mishnah"—The next two or three centuries were occupied by the Rabbis in their schools of Palestine and Babylonia in a further commentary on the "Mishnah"—This second work of the Rabbis was termed the "Gemara". 342

IV

THE TALMUD

Portions of the "Talmud" had existed before A.D. 70—probably some few of the "Halachah" and "Haggadah" even dating from the days of Moses—some from the times of the Judges, and others belonging to the schools of the Prophets—In the times of Ezra arose the strange and unique "Guild of Scribes," devoted to the study and interpretation of the sacred writings and the traditions which had gathered round them in past ages—R. Hillel a little before the Christian era began the task of arranging the results of the labours of the scribes—R. Akiba after A.D. 70 continued the work of arrangement, but was interrupted—His fame and story—R. Meir further worked at the same task, which was finally completed by R. Judah the Holy, who generally arranged the Mishnah in the form in which it has come down to us—This "Mishnah" served as the text for the great academies of Palestine and Babylonia to work on in the third and two following centuries—Their writings are known as the "Gemara"—The Mishnah and Gemara together form the Talmud—A picture of the great Rabbinic academies of Palestine and Babylonia—Their methods of study 347

V

HOW THE TEXT OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS PRESERVED

Description of the Massorah—The work of the Massorites in the preservation of the text of the sacred books—Present condition of the Massorah 361

VI

CONCLUDING MEMORANDA

PAGE

Inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, according to the Talmud account 364
The story of the Talmud through the ages 365
The Talmud and the New Testament 366
Influence of the Talmud on Judaism 368
Influence of the Talmud on Christianity 370

VII

(*A*) AN APPENDIX ON THE "HAGGADAH"

"Haggadah" in the Talmud and in other ancient Rabbinical writings—Signification of the "Haggadah"—Its great importance—Its enduring popularity 371
Examples of "Haggadah" quoted from the Palestinian Targum on Deuteronomy 373

VIII

(*B*) ON THE "HALACHAH" AND "HAGGADAH"

The general purport of the "Halachah"—Some illustrations—Further details connected with the "Haggadah"—It is not confined to the later Books of the Old Testament—The "Haggadah" also belongs to the Pentateuch—Examples of this quoted—Instances of the influence of "Haggadah" in the New Testament Books 376

IX

WOMEN'S DISABILITIES 380

INDEX 381

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAINTING IN THE CATACOMBS, SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES. THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN THE CENTRE. ON THE LEFT, DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS. ON THE RIGHT, THE THREE CHILDREN IN THE FURNACE . . . *Frontispiece*

From Palmer's *Early Christian Symbolism.* By permission of KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & CO.

FACING PAGE

THE "COME AND DINE" OF THE LAST CHAPTER OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL—THE MYSTIC REPAST OF THE SEVEN DISCIPLES (CEMETERY OF CALLISTUS, SECOND CENTURY. A FAVOURITE PICTURE IN THE CATACOMBS) 219

ENTRANCE TO THE CEMETERY OF S. DOMITILLA (CRYPT OF THE FLAVIANS, FIRST CENTURY) 240

From *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana.* By permission of the Author, ORAZIO MARUCCHI

PAINTINGS IN A CHAPEL OF CATACOMB OF S. CALLISTUS, SHOWING A TOMB SUBSEQUENTLY EXCAVATED ABOVE THE ORIGINAL TOMB OF THE SAINT 245

Photo, S. J. BECKETT

MOSAIC IN THE APSE OF THE CHURCH OF STA. PUDENZIANA, ROME . 263

Photo, MOSCIONI

IN THE CATACOMB OF S. PRISCILLA (SECOND OR THIRD CENTURY) . 267

Photo, S. J. BECKETT

CHAPEL OF THE TOMBS OF THE THIRD-CENTURY BISHOPS OF ROME, PARTLY RESTORED—CATACOMB OF S. CALLISTUS . 273

Photo, S. J. BECKETT

S. PETER'S, ROME—THE CONFESSION 281

Photo, S. J. BECKETT

FACING PAGE

A Replica of Maderno's Effigy of S. Cecilia—as she was found—is in the Niche of the S. Callistus Chamber, where the Body originally was deposited . . 293

Photo, S. J. Beckett

Sepulchral Inscriptions from the Roman Catacombs . . 310

Photo, S. J. Beckett

The Temple—Jerusalem—The Holy Place . . . 330

From the *Jewish Encyclopædia*. By permission of Funk & Wagnalls Co.

The "Wailing-Place" of the Jews, before the Ruined Walls of the Temple 332

Photo, The Photochrom Co.

The Temple, Jerusalem, before its Destruction by Titus, A.D. 70 340

From a drawing in the *Jewish Encyclopædia*. By permission.

"ASSURED the trial, fiery, fierce, but fleet,
Would, from his little heap of ashes, lend
Wings to that conflagration of the world
Which Christ awaits ere He makes all things new:
So should the frail become the perfect, rapt
From glory of pain to glory of joy."

BROWNING, *The Ring and the Book*, x. 1797

BOOK I

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY IN ROME

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

THE JEWISH COLONY IN ROME

AT the beginning of the first century of the Christian era the Jewish colony in Rome had attained large dimensions. As early as B.C. 162 we hear of agreements—we can scarcely call them treaties—concluded between the Jews under the Maccabean dynasty and the Republic. After the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey, B.C. 63, a number more of Jewish exiles swelled the number of the chosen people who had settled in the capital. Cicero when pleading for Flaccus, who was their enemy, publicly alludes to their numbers and influence. Their ranks were still further recruited in B.C. 51, when a lieutenant of Crassus brought some thousands of Jewish prisoners to Rome. During the civil wars, Julius Cæsar showed marked favour to the chosen people. After his murder they were prominent among those who mourned him.

Augustus continued the policy of Julius Cæsar, and showed them much favour; their influence in Roman society during the earlier years of the Empire seems to have been considerable. They are mentioned by the great poets who flourished in the Augustan age. The Jewish Sabbath is especially alluded to by Roman writers as positively becoming a fashionable observance in the capital.

A few distinguished families, who really possessed little of the Hebrew character and nationality beyond the name, such as the Herods, adopted the manners and ways of life

of the Roman patrician families; but as a rule the Jews in foreign lands preferred the obscurity to which the reputation of poverty condemned them. Some of them were doubtless possessors of wealth, but they carefully concealed it; the majority, however, were poor, and they even gloried in their poverty; they haunted the lowest and poorest quarters of the great city. Restlessly industrious, they made their livelihood, many of them, out of the most worthless objects of merchandise; but they obtained in the famous capital a curious celebrity. There was something peculiar in this strange people at once attractive and repellent. The French writer Allard, in the exhaustive and striking volumes in which he tells the story of the persecutions in his own novel and brilliant way, epigrammatically writes of the Jew in the golden age of Augustus as " one who was known to pray and to pore over his holy national literature in Rome which never prayed and which possessed no religious books " (" Il prie et il étudie ses livres saintes, dans Rome qui n'a pas de théologie et qui ne prie pas ").

They lived their solitary life alone in the midst of the crowded city—by themselves in life, by themselves, too, in death; for they possessed their own cemeteries in the suburbs,—catacombs we now term them,—strange God's acres where they buried, for they never burned, their dead, carefully avoiding the practice of cremation, a practice then generally in vogue in pagan Rome. Upon these Jewish cemeteries the Christians, as they increased in numbers, largely modelled those vast cities of the dead of which we shall speak presently.

They watched over and tenderly succoured their own poor and needy, the widow and the orphan; on the whole living pure self-denying lives, chiefly disfigured by the restless spirit, which ever dwelt in the Jewish race, of greed and avarice. They were happy, however, in their own way, living on the sacred memories of a glorious past, believing with an intense belief that they were still, as in the glorious days of David and Solomon, the people beloved of God—and that ever beneath them, in spite of their many confessed backslidings, were the Everlasting Arms; trusting, with a faith which

never paled or faltered, that the day would surely come when out of their own people a mighty Deliverer would arise, who would restore them to their loved sacred city and country; would invest His own, His chosen nation, with a glory and power grander, greater than the world had ever seen.

There is no doubt but that the Jew of Rome in Rome's golden days, in spite of his seeming poverty and degradation, possessed a peculiar moral power in the great empire, unknown among pagan nations.[1]

In the reign of Nero, when the disciples of Jesus in Rome first emerged from the clouds and mists which envelop the earliest days of Roman Christianity, the number of Jews in the capital is variously computed as amounting to from 30,000 to 50,000 persons.

The Jewish colony in Rome was a thoroughly representative body of Jews. They were gathered from many centres of population, Palestine and Jerusalem itself contributing a considerable contingent. They evidently were distinguished for the various qualities, good and bad, which generally characterized this strange, wonderful people. They were restless, at times turbulent, proud and disdainful, avaricious and grasping; but at the same time they were tender and compassionate in a very high degree to the sad-eyed unfortunate ones among their own people,—most reverent, as we have remarked, in the matter of disposing of their dead,—on the whole giving an example of a morality far higher than that which, as a rule, prevailed among the citizens of the mighty capital in the midst of whom they dwelt.

The nobler qualities which emphatically distinguished the race were no doubt fostered by the intense religious spirit

[1] A singular and interesting passage of Allard here deserves to be quoted verbatim: "Dans Rome où le celibat est devenue une plaie sociale, où la population diminue, où la stérilité regne au foyer domestique, où l'avortement l'infanticide sont frequents et à peine réprimés, les Juifs seules ont beaucoup d'enfants—Tacite a défini d'un mot ce trait de leur race; 'generandi amor,' dit-il en énumerant les principaux charactères du peuple Juif. Tous les témoignages anciens parlent de leur grand nombre; 'augmenter était une de leurs préoccupations, '*augendæ multitudini consulitur*' dit encore Tacite." See Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 5; Allard, i. p. 12.

which lived and breathed in every Jewish household. The fear of the eternal God, who they believed with an intense and changeless faith loved them, was ever before the eyes alike of the humblest, poorest little trader, as of the wealthiest merchant in their company.

I

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IN ROME—"A"

INTO this mass of Jewish strangers dwelling in the great city came the news of the wonderful work of Jesus Christ.

As among the Jews at Jerusalem, so too in Rome, the story of the Cross attracted many—repelled many. The glorious news of salvation, of redemption, sank quietly into many a sick and weary heart; these hearts were kindled into a passionate love for Him who had redeemed them—into a love such as had never before been kindled in any human heart. While, on the other hand, with many, the thought that the treasured privileges of the chosen people were henceforward to be shared on equal terms by the despised Gentile world, excited a bitter and uncompromising opposition—an opposition which oftentimes shaded into an intense hate.

The question as to who *first* preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to this great Jewish colony will probably never be answered. There is a high probability that the "story of the Cross" was told very soon after the Resurrection by some of those pilgrims to the Holy City who had been eye-witnesses of the miracle of the first Pentecost.

There is, however, a question connected with the beginnings of Christianity in Rome which is of the deepest interest to the student of ecclesiastical history, a question upon which much that has happened since largely hangs.

Was S. Peter in any way connected with the laying of the foundation of the great Christian community in Rome; can he really be considered as one of the founders of that most important Church? An immemorial tradition persists in so connecting him; upon what grounds is this most ancient tradition based?

Scholars of all religious schools of thought now generally

allow that S. Peter visited Rome and spent some time in the capital city; wrote his great First Epistle from it, in which Epistle he called "Rome" by the not unusual mystic name of "Babylon," and eventually suffered martyrdom there on a spot hard by the mighty basilica called by his name.

The only point at issue is, did he—as the favourite tradition asserts—pay his first visit to Rome quite early in the Christian story, *circa* A.D. 42, remaining there for some seven or eight years preaching and teaching, laying the foundations of the great Church which rapidly sprang up in the capital?

Then when the decree of the Emperor Claudius banished the Jews, A.D. 49–50, the tradition asserts that the apostle returned to the East, was present at the Apostolic Council held at Jerusalem A.D. 50, only returning to Rome *circa* A.D. 63. Somewhere about A.D. 64 the First Epistle of Peter was probably written from Rome.[1] His martyrdom there is best dated about A.D. 67.

A careful examination of the most ancient "Notices" bearing especially on the question of the laying of the early stories of the Roman Church, determines the writer of this little study to adopt the above rough statement of S. Peter's work at Rome. Some of the principal portions of these "notices" will now be quoted, that it may be seen upon what basis the conclusion in question is adopted. The quotations will be followed by a sketch of the traditional and other evidence specially drawn from the testimony of the very early Roman catacomb of S. Priscilla. This sketch, which is here termed the "traditional evidence," it will be seen, powerfully supports the deduction derived from the notices quoted from very early Christian literature.

[1] Professor Ramsay in his book, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, prefers a later date for the composition of the First Epistle of St. Peter than that usually given, A.D. 64–5. He believes it was impregnated with Roman thought and was certainly written from Rome, but not before A.D. 80. This would give a long period of Roman work to the apostle; still—able as are Professor Ramsay's arguments—the later date and all that it involves are absolutely at variance with the universal tradition.

The Quotations

Clemens Romanus, A.D. 95–6. In the fifth chapter of the well-known and undoubtedly authentic *Letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians*, the writer calls the attention of the Corinthians to the examples of the Christian "athletes" who "lived very near to our own time." He speaks of the apostles who were persecuted, and who were faithful to death. "There was Peter, who after undergoing many sufferings, and having borne his testimony, went to his appointed place of glory. There was Paul, who after enduring chains, imprisonments, stonings, again and again, and sufferings of all kinds . . . likewise endured martyrdom, and so departed from this world."

The reason why Clement of Rome mentions these two special apostles (other apostles had already suffered martyrdom) is obvious. Clement was referring to examples of which they themselves had been eye-witnesses. Paul, it is universally acknowledged, was martyred in Rome; is not the inference from the words of Clement, that Peter suffered martyrdom in this same city also, overwhelming?

Ignatius, circa A.D. 108–9, some twelve or thirteen years after Clement had written his *Epistle to the Corinthians*, on his journey to his martyrdom at Rome, thus writes to the Roman Church: "I do not command you like Peter and Paul: they were apostles; I am a condemned criminal." Why now did Ignatius single out Peter and Paul? So Bishop Lightfoot, commenting on this passage, forcibly says: "Ignatius was writing from Asia Minor. He was a guest of a disciple of John at the time. He was sojourning in a country where John was the one prominent name. The only conceivable reason why he specially named Peter and Paul was that these two apostles had both visited Rome and were remembered by the Roman Church."

Papias of Hierapolis, born *circa* A.D. 60–70. His writings probably date somewhat late in the first quarter of the second century. On the authority of Presbyter John, a personal disciple of the Lord, Papias tells us about Mark: he was a friend and interpreter of S. Peter, and wrote down what he heard

his master teach, and there (in Rome) composed his "record." This notice seems to have been connected by Papias with 1 Pet. v. 13, where Mark is alluded to in connexion with the fellow-elect in Babylon (Rome).

"It seems," concludes Bishop Lightfoot, referring to Irenæus (*S. Clement of Rome*, ii. 494), "a tolerably safe inference, therefore, that Papias represented S. Peter as being in Rome, that he stated Mark to have been with him there, and that he assigned to the latter a Gospel record (the second Gospel) which was committed to writing for the instruction of the Romans."

Dionysius of Corinth, A.D. 170, quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.* II. xxv.), wrote to Soter, bishop of Rome, as follows: "Herein by such instructions (to us) ye have united the trees of the Romans and Corinthians (trees) planted by Peter and Paul. For they both alike came also to our Corinth, and taught us; and both alike came together to Italy, and having taught there, suffered martyrdom at the same time."

Irenæus, circa A.D. 177–90, writes: "Matthew published also a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the Church in Rome. Again after their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself also handed down to us in writing the lessons preached by Peter."—*H. E.* III. i. 1.

Clement of Alexandria, *circa* A.D. 193–217 (*Hypotyposes*, quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.* vi. 14) tells us how, "when Peter had preached the word publicly in Rome, and declared the gospel by the Spirit, the bystanders, being many in number, exhorted Mark as having accompanied him for a long time, and remembering what he had said, to write out his statements, and having thus composed his Gospel, to communicate it to them; and that when Peter learnt this, he used no pressure either to prevent him or to urge him forwards."

Tertullian, circa A.D. 200, adds his testimony thus: "We read in the lives of the Cæsars, Nero was the first to stain the rising faith with blood. Thus Peter is girt by another (quoting the Lord's words) when he is bound to the Cross. Thus Paul obtains his birthright of Roman citizenship when he is born again there by the nobility of Martyrdom."—*Scorpiace*, 15.

Tertullian again writes : " Nor does it matter whether they are among those whom John baptized in the Jordan, or those whom Peter baptized in the Tiber."—*De Baptismo*, 4.

Tertullian once more tells us : " The Church of the Romans reports that Clement was ordained by Peter." — *De Præscriptione Hær.* 36.

Tertullian again bears similar testimony : " If thou art near to Italy, thou hast Rome. . . . How happy is that Church on whom the apostles shed all their teaching with their blood, where Peter is conformed to the passion of the Lord, where Paul is crowned with the death of John (the Baptist), where the Apostle John after having been plunged in boiling oil, without suffering any harm, is banished to an island ! "—*De Præscriptione*, 36.

Caius (or Gaius) the Roman presbyter, *circa* A.D. 200–20, who lived in the days of Pope Zephyrinus, and was a contemporary of Hippolytus, if not (as Lightfoot suspects) identical with him (Hippolytus of Portus), gives us the following detail : " I can show you the trophies (the Memoriæ or Chapel-Tombs) of the apostles. For if you will go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way, thou wilt find (there) the trophies (the Memoriæ) of those who founded the Church."

Caius is here claiming for his own Church of Rome the authority of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, whose martyred bodies rest in Rome.—Quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.* II. XXV.

Thus at that early date when Caius wrote, the localities of the graves of the two apostles were reputed to have been the spots where now stand the great basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul.

Eusebius, *H. E.* II. xiv., gives a definite date for the first coming of Peter to Rome, and his preaching there. The historian was describing the influence of Simon Magus at Rome. This, he adds, did not long continue, " for immediately under the reign of Claudius, by the benign and gracious providence of God, Peter, that powerful and great apostle who by his courage took the lead of all the rest, was conducted to Rome against this pest of mankind. He (S. Peter) bore the precious merchandise of the revealed light from the East to those in the West, announcing this light itself, and salutary

doctrine of the soul, the proclamation of the kingdom of God."

Eusebius also writes that "Linus, whom he (Paul) has mentioned in his Second Epistle to Timothy as his companion at Rome, has been before shown to have been the first after Peter that obtained the Episcopate at Rome."—Eusebius, *H. E.* III. iv.

. . . . . .

The *traditional* memories of Peter's residence in Rome and his prolonged teaching there are very numerous. De Rossi while quoting certain of these as legendary, adds that an historical basis underlies these notices. Some of the more interesting of these are connected with the house and family of Pudens on the Aventine, and with the cemetery of Saint Priscilla on the Via Salaria.

To the pilgrims of the fifth and following centuries were pointed out the chair in which Peter used to sit and teach (Sedes ubi prius sedit S. Petrus), and also the cemeterium fontis S. Petri—cemeterium ubi Petrus baptizaverat. Marucchi, the pupil and successor of De Rossi, believes that this cemetery where it was said S. Peter used to baptize, is identical with parts of the vast and ancient catacomb of Priscilla. These and further traditional notices are dwelt on with greater detail presently when the general evidence is summed up.[1]

[1] See the detailed account of this catacomb, Book IV. 261 and following pages.

II

A SUMMARY OF LITERARY NOTICES

AND now to sum up the evidence we have been quoting : The *Literary Notices* have been gathered from all parts of the Roman world where Christianity had made a lodgment.

From *Rome* (Clement of Rome) in the first and second centuries and early in the third century.

From *Antioch* (Ignatius, Papias) (including Syria and Asia Minor) very early in the second century.

From *Corinth* (Greece) (Dionysius) in the second half of the second century.

From *Lyons* (Gaul) (Irenæus) in the second half of the second century.

From *Alexandria* (Egypt) (Clement of Alexandria) in the second half of the second century.

From *Carthage* (North Africa) (Tertullian) in the close of the second century.

These and other literary notices, more or less definitely, all ascribe the laying of the foundation stories of the Church of Rome to the preaching and teaching of the Apostles Peter and Paul. All without exception in their notices of this foundation work place the *name of Peter first.* It is hardly conceivable that these very early writers would have done this had Peter only made his appearance in Rome for the first time in A.D. 63 or 64, *after* Paul's residence in the capital for some two years, when he was awaiting the trial which resulted in his acquittal.

Then again, the repeated mention of the two great apostles as the *Founders* of the Roman Church would have been singularly inaccurate if neither of them had visited the capital before A.D. 60–1, the date of Paul's arrival, and A.D. 63–4, the

date of S. Peter's coming, supposing we assume the later date for S. Peter's coming and preaching.

When we examine the literary notices in question we find in several of them a more circumstantial account of Peter's work than Paul's; for instance:

Papias and *Irenæus* give us special details of S. Mark's position as the interpreter of S. Peter, and tell us particularly how the friend and disciple of S. Peter took down his master's words, which he subsequently moulded into what is known as the second Gospel.

Tertullian relates that S. Peter baptized in the Tiber, and mentions, too, how this apostle ordained Clement.

Eusebius, the great Church historian to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of early Church history, writing in the early years of Constantine's reign, in the first quarter of the fourth century, goes still more into detail, and gives us approximately the date of S. Peter's first coming, which he states to have been in the reign of Claudius, who was Emperor from A.D. 41 to A.D. 54 (Eusebius, *H. E.* II. xiv.). The same historian also repeats the account above referred to of Mark's work as Peter's companion and scribe in Rome (*H. E.* II. xv.), adding that the "Church in Babylon" referred to by S. Peter (1 Ep. v. 13) signified the Church of Rome.

Jerome, writing in the latter years of the same century (the fourth), is very definite on the question of the early arrival of S. Peter at Rome—"Romam mittitur," says the great scholar, "ubi evangelium prædicans XXV annis ejusdem urbis episcopus perseverat." Now, reckoning back the twenty-five years of S. Peter's supervision of the Roman Church would bring S. Peter's first presence in Rome to A.D. 42–3; for Jerome tells us how "Post Petrum primus Romanam ecclesiam tenuit Linus," and the early catalogues of the Roman Bishops—the Eusebian (Armenian version), the catalogue of Jerome, and the catalogue called the Liberian—give the date of Linus' accession respectively as A.D. 66, A.D. 68, A.D. 67.

The early lists or catalogues of the Bishops of Rome, just casually referred to, are another important and weighty witness to the ancient and generally received tradition of the early visit and prolonged presence of S. Peter at Rome.

The first of these in the middle of the second century was drawn up, as far as Eleutherius, A.D. 177–90 by Hegesippus, a Hebrew Christian. Eusebius is our authority for this. This list, however, has not come down to us. It is, however, probable that it was the basis, as far as it went, of the list drawn up by Irenæus *circa* A.D. 180–90. This is the earliest catalogue of the Roman Bishops which we possess. Irenæus, after stating that the Roman Church was founded by the Apostles Peter and Paul, adds that they entrusted the office of the Episcopate to Linus.

In the Armenian version of the *Chronicles* of Eusebius, the only version in which we possess this Eusebian Chronicle, Peter appears at the head of the list of Roman Bishops, and twenty years is given as the duration of his government of the Church. Linus is stated to have been his successor. In the list of S. Jerome a similar order is preserved—with the slight difference of twenty-five years instead of twenty as the duration of S. Peter's rule. The deduction which naturally follows these entries in the two lists has been already suggested. The Liberian Catalogue, compiled *circa* A.D. 354, places S. Peter at the head of the Roman Bishops—giving twenty-five years as the duration of his government. Linus follows here.

The Liberian Catalogue was the basis of the great historical work now generally known as the "Liber Pontificalis," which in its notices of the early Popes embodies the whole of the Liberian Catalogue—only giving fresh details. The "Liber Pontificalis" in its first portion in its present form is traced back to the earlier years of the sixth century.

The traditional notices of the early presence of S. Peter in Rome are many and various. Taken by themselves they are, no doubt, not convincing—some of them ranking as purely legendary—though we recognize even in these "purely legendary" notices an historical foundation; but taken together they constitute an argument of no little weight.

Among the "purely legendary" we have touched upon the memories which hang round the house of Pudens, and the church which in very early times arose on its site.[1] Of far

[1] On these memories which belong to the house of Pudens and his family, see pp. 262–270.

greater historical value are the memories which belong to the Catacomb of Priscilla, memories which recent discoveries in that most ancient cemetery go far to lift many of the old traditions into the realm of serious history.

The historical fact of the burial (*depositio*) of some ten or eleven of the first Bishops round the sacred tomb of the Apostle S. Peter (*juxta corpus beati Petri in Vaticano*), gives additional colour to the tradition of the immemorial reverence which from the earliest times of the Church of Rome encircles the memory of S. Peter.

From the third century onward we find the Roman Bishops claiming as their proudest title to honour their position as successors of S. Peter. In all the controversies which subsequently arose between Rome and the East this position was never questioned. Duchesne, in his last great work,[1] ever careful and scholarly, does not hesitate to term the "Church of Rome" (he is dwelling on its historical aspect) the "Church of S. Peter."

This study on the work of S. Peter in the matter of laying the early stories of the great Church which after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 indisputably became the metropolis of Christianity, has been necessarily somewhat long—the question is one of the highest importance to the historian of ecclesiastical history. Was this lofty claim of the long line of Bishops of Rome to be the successors of S. Peter, ever one of their chief titles to honour, based on historic evidence, or was it simply an invention of a later age?

All serious historians now are agreed that S. Peter taught in Rome, wrote his Epistle from Rome, and subsequently suffered martyrdom there.

But historians, as we have stated, are not agreed upon the date of his first appearance in the queen city. Now the sum of the evidence massed together in the foregoing brief study, leads to the indisputable conclusion that the date of his coming to Rome must be placed very early in the story of Christianity, somewhere about A.D. 41–3.

Everything points to this conclusion. How could Peter be, with any accuracy, styled the "Founder of the Church of

[1] *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, vol. i. p. 61 (4th edition, 1908).

Rome" if he never appeared in Rome before A.D. 64? Long before this date the Church of the metropolis had been "founded," had had time to become a large and flourishing Christian community. This estimate of the signal importance of the Church of Rome is based on various testimonies, among which may be ranked the long list of salutations in S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, written *circa* A.D. 58.

All the various notices of the leading Christian writers of the first and second centuries in all lands carefully style him as such. Paul, it is true, in most, not in all these early writings, is associated with him as a joint founder: this in a real sense can also be understood; for although Paul came at a later date to Rome and dwelt there some two years, the presence of one of the greatest of the early Christian teachers would surely add enormously to the stability of the foundations laid years before. The teaching of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, continued for two years, was, of course, a very important factor in the "foundation work," and was evidently always reckoned as such.

But even then, as we have seen, while the two apostles are frequently joined together as founders in the writings of the early Christian teachers, in several notable instances Peter's work is especially dwelt upon by them.

Then again in the traditional "Memories" preserved to us, some of them of the highest historical value, it is Peter, not Paul, who is ever the principal figure. Paul rarely, if ever, appears in them. Great though undoubtedly Paul was as a teacher of the Christian mysteries and as an expounder of Christian doctrine, it is emphatically Peter, not Paul, who lives in the "memories" of the Roman Christian community.

The place which the two basilicas of S. Peter and S. Paul on the Vatican Hill and on the Ostian Way have ever occupied in the minds and hearts not only of the Roman people, but of all the innumerable pilgrims in all ages to the sacred shrines of Rome, seems accurately to measure the respective places which the two apostles hold in the estimate of the Roman Church.

The comparative neglect of S. Paul's basilica in Rome when measured with the undying reverence shown to, and with the enormous pains and cost bestowed on the sister

basilica of S. Peter, is due not to any want of reverence or respect for the noble Apostle of the Gentiles, but solely because Rome and the pilgrims to Rome were deeply conscious of the special debt of Rome to S. Peter, who was evidently the real founder of the mighty Church of the capital.

The writer of this work is fully conscious that the conclusion to which he has come after massing together all the available evidence, is not the usual conclusion arrived at by one great and influential school of thought in our midst; nor does it accord with the conclusion of that eminently just scholar Bishop Lightfoot, who while positively affirming the presence of S. Peter in Rome, whence, as he allows, he wrote his First Epistle, and where through pain and agony he passed to his longed-for rest in his Master's Paradise, yet cannot accept the tradition of his early presence in the metropolis.

The writer of this study has no doubt whatever that the teaching of the vast majority of the Roman Catholic writers on this point is strictly accurate, and that S. Peter at a comparatively early date, probably somewhere about the year of grace 42–3, came to Rome confirmed in the faith—taught—strengthened with his own blessed memories of his adored Master—the little band of Christians already dwelling in the capital of the Empire. Under his pious training the little band, in the six, seven, or eight years of his residence in their midst, became the strong nucleus of the powerful Church of Rome.

Then, most probably, he left Rome when the decree of the Emperor Claudius, A.D. 49, was promulgated: the decree which was the result of the disturbances among the turbulent Jewish colony,—disturbances no doubt owing to bitter and relentless opposition to the fast spreading of the Christian faith in their midst. As Suetonius (Claudius, 25) tersely but clearly tells us: "Judæos, impulsore Christo assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit."

From the year 49, when he left the Queen City, S. Peter apparently was absent from the Church in which for some seven or eight years he had laboured so well and so successfully, continuing his work, however, in other lands. Then in A.D. 63–4 he returned, resumed his Roman work, wrote the First

Epistle which bears his name, and eventually suffered martyrdom.

This conclusion, of such deep importance in early ecclesiastical history, has been arrived at—as the student of the foregoing pages will see—from no one statement, from no whole class, so to speak, of evidences, but from the *cumulative* evidence afforded by the massing together the statements of early writers, the testimony of the catacombs, the witness of tradition, and the voice of what may almost be accurately termed immemorial history.[1]

[1] It will be noticed that an interesting hypothesis dwelt on by Allard (*Histoire des Persécutions*, vol. i.) and by other writers has not been quoted among the foregoing testimonies. It is curious and deserving of notice, but it is at best only an ingenious supposition.

These scholars suggest that when S. Peter, after his deliverance through the interference of an angel guide, escaped from the prison of Herod Antipas and went to another place (Acts xii. 17), that the "other place" so mysteriously and strangely alluded to by the writer of the "Acts" signified Rome.

A Roman tradition handed down to us through the medium of early Christian art, curiously seems to connect the angelic deliverance of the Apostle S. Peter with *Rome*. On some twenty of the early Christian sarcophagi preserved in the Lateran Museum, the arrest and imprisonment of S. Peter by the soldiers of Herod Antipas form the subject of the sculpture. Why, pertinently ask these writers, was this special scene in the life of S. Peter selected as the subject graved on so many of these ancient coffins of the Roman Christian dead? They reply—The connexion which traditionally existed between this imprisonment and the angelic deliverance with the first coming of the apostle to Rome.

. . . . . .

Bishop Lightfoot somewhat strangely remarks (*Clement of Rome*, vol. ii. p. 491): "S. Paul could not have written as he writes to the Romans (i. 11, xv. 20–24) if they had received even a short visit from an apostle, more especially if that apostle were S. Peter."

It is difficult to see how he makes this deduction from S. Paul's words in the passages in question. In the first passage (Rom. i. 11), S. Paul, after addressing the Roman Christians, and thanking God that their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world, adds that he longs to see these Christians, that he may impart to them some spiritual gift to the end that they may be established. Then he explains or, as it were, recalls what he has said, that he might not seem to think them insufficiently instructed or established in the faith, and therefore in the words which follow closely, "that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me," turns the end of his coming to them to their mutual rejoicing in one another's faith, when he and they shall come to know one another.

In the second passage (Rom. xv. 20–24), S. Paul plainly states that his work had been to preach the gospel "not where Christ was named, lest he should build upon another man's foundation"—that is, not where Christ was preached by another before me.

Then he adds, that he considered the preaching of Christ where he had not been named the most needful work; he therefore declined going to Rome, where was a Church already planted; but now, having no more Churches to plant in the regions where he was sojourning, he signifies his resolution of visiting the Roman Church.

Any deduction that could be drawn from these two passages in S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, would seem to be exactly the contrary to that suggested by Lightfoot.

PART II

I

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH IN ROME—"B"

THE Roman Church in the year of grace 61 was evidently already a powerful and influential congregation: everything points to this conclusion: its traditions, we might even say its history, and, above all, the notices contained in S. Paul's Epistle to the Romans written not later than A.D. 58.

Virtually alone among the Churches of the first thirty years of Christianity does S. Paul give to this congregation unstinting, unqualified praise—very different to his words addressed to the Church in Corinth in both of his Epistles to that notable Christian centre, or to the Galatian congregation in his letter to the Church of that province; or even to the Thessalonians, the Church which he loved well, where reproach and grave warnings are mingled with and colour his loving words.

But to the Church of Rome, in which in its many early years of struggle and combat he bore no part whatever, his praise is quite unmingled with rebuke or warning. As regards this congregation (Rom. i. 8), Paul thanks God for them all that their faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. In the concluding chapter of the Epistle, some twenty-five specially distinguished members of the Roman congregation are saluted by name, though it by no means follows that S. Paul was personally acquainted with all of those who were named by him.

About three years after writing his famous letter to the Romans,—just referred to,—Paul came as a prisoner to the

capital city. But although a prisoner awaiting a public trial, the imperial government gave him free liberty to receive in his own hired house members of the Christian Church, and indeed any who chose to come and listen to his teaching; and this liberty of free access to him was continued all through the two years of his waiting for the public trial. The words of the "Acts of the Apostles," a writing universally received as authentic, are singularly definite here: "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house (in Rome), and received all that came unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts xxviii. 30–31).

It was during these two years of the imprisonment that the great teacher justified his subsequent title, accorded him by so many of the early Christian writers, of joint founder with S. Peter of the Roman Church. The foundations of the Church of the metropolis we believe certainly to have been laid by another leading member of the apostolic band, S. Peter.[1] But S. Paul's share in strengthening and in building up this Church, the most important congregation in the first days of Christianity, was without doubt very great.

At a very early period, certainly after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, Rome became the acknowledged centre and the metropolis of Christendom. The great world-capital was the meeting-place of the followers of the Name from all lands. Thither, too, naturally flocked the teachers of the principal heresies in doctrinal truth which very soon sprang up among Christian converts. Under these conditions something more, in such a centre as Rome, was imperatively needed than the simple direct Gospel teaching, however fervid: something additional to the recital of the wondrous Gospel story as told by S. Peter and repeated possibly verbatim by his disciple S. Mark. A deeper and fuller instruction was surely required in such a centre as Rome quickly became. Men would ask, Who and what was the Divine Founder of the religion,—what was His relation to the Father, what to the angel-world? What was known of His pre-

[1] See above, pp. 7–12, where the question of the foundation of the Church in Rome is fully discussed.

existence? These and such-like questions would speedily press for a reply in such a cosmopolitan centre as imperial Rome. Inspired teaching bearing on such points as these required to be welded into the original foundation stories of the leading Church which Rome speedily became, and this was supplied by the great master S. Paul, to whom the Holy Ghost had vouchsafed what may be justly termed a double portion of the Spirit. The Christology of Paul, to use a later theological term, was, in view of all that was about to come to pass in the immediate future, a most necessary part of the equipment of the Church of God in Rome.

The keynote of the famous master's teaching during those two years of his Roman imprisonment may be doubtless found in the letters written by him at that time. Three of these, the "Ephesian," "Colossian," and "Philippian" Epistles, were emphatically massive expositions of doctrine—especially that addressed to the Colossians. From these we can gather what was the principal subject-matter of the Pauline teaching at Rome. His thoughts were largely taken up with the great doctrinal questions bearing on the person of the Founder of Christianity.

We will quote one or two passages from the great doctrinal Epistle to the Colossians as examples of the Pauline teaching at this juncture of his life when he was engaged in building up the Roman Church, and furnishing it with an arsenal of weapons which would soon be needed in *their* life and death contest with the dangerous heresies[1] which so soon made their appearance in the city which was at once the metropolis of the Church and the Empire.

"The Father, . . . who hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, . . . who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the Church: who

[1] Such as the heresies of the Nicolaitans and Cerinthians, and certain of the false Docetic teachings.

is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell ; and, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself ; by Him (I say), whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. i. 12–20).

And once more : " Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, . . . and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power."

Preaching on such texts, which contain those tremendous truths which just at this time he embodied in his Colossian letter, did S. Paul lay the foundation of the " Christology " of the Church of Rome. With justice, then, was he ranked by the early Christian writers as one of the founders of the Roman Church, for he was without doubt the principal teacher of the famous congregation in the all-important doctrinal truths bearing on the person and office of Jesus Christ.

S. Peter, whose yet earlier work at Rome, we believe, stretching over some eight or nine years, we have already dwelt on, was evidently absent from the capital when S. Paul in A.D. 58 wrote his famous Letter to the Romans ; nor had he returned in A.D. 61, when Paul was brought to the metropolis as a prisoner ; but that he returned to Rome somewhere about A.D. 63–4 is fairly certain.

II

THE FIRE OF ROME, AND ITS RESULTS AS REGARDS CHRISTIANS—A.D. 64. HENCEFORTH THEY WERE REGARDED AS ENEMIES OF THE STATE

FOR a little more than thirty years, dating back to the Resurrection morning, with the exception of the occasion of that temporary and partial banishment of the Jews and Christians from Rome in the days of the Emperor Claudius, had the Christian propaganda gone on apparently unnoticed, certainly unheeded by the imperial government.

The banishment decree of Claudius, the outcome of a local disturbance in the Jewish quarter of the capital, was after a brief interval apparently rescinded, or at least ignored by the ruling powers; but in the middle of the year 64, only a few months after S. Paul's long-delayed trial and acquittal and subsequent departure from Rome, a startling event happened which brought the Christians into a sad notoriety, and put an end to the attitude of contemptuous indifference with which they had been generally regarded by the magistrates both in the provinces and in the capital.

A terrible and unlooked for calamity reduced Rome to a state of mourning and desolation. The 19th July, A.D. 64,—the date of the commencement of the desolating fire,—was long remembered. It broke out in the shops which clustered round the great Circus; a strong summer wind fanned the flames, which soon became uncontrollable. The narrow streets of the old quarter and the somewhat crumbling buildings fed the fire, which raged for some nine days, destroying many of the ancient historic buildings. Thousands of the poorer inhabitants were rendered homeless and penniless. At that period Rome was divided into fourteen regions or

quarters ; of these three were entirely consumed ; seven more were rendered uninhabitable by the fierce fire ; only four were left really unharmed by the desolating calamity.

The passions of the mob, ever quickly aroused, were directed in the first instance against the Emperor Nero, who was accused —probably quite wrongfully—of being the incendiary : there is indeed a long, a mournful chronicle of evil deeds registered against the memory of this evil Emperor ; but that he was the guilty author of this special outrage is in the highest degree unlikely. His wild life, his cruelties, his ungovernable passions, his insanity,—for no reader of history can doubt that in his case the sickness which so often affects an uncontrolled despot had with Nero resulted in insanity,—indeed, all his works and days, gave colour to the monstrous and absurd charges which a fickle and angry mob brought against the once strangely popular tyrant.

All kinds of wild stories connected with the fire were circulated ; he had no doubt many remorseless enemies. Men said, Nero sitting high on one of the towers of Rome, watched with fiendish joy and exultation the progress of the devouring flames, and as Rome burned before his eyes, played upon his lyre and sung a hymn of his own composition, for he imagined himself a poet, in which he compared the burning of his Rome with the ruin of Troy.

Another legend was current, averring that the slaves of the Emperor's household had been seen fanning the flames in their desolating course ; another rumour was spread abroad which whispered that the mad and wicked Emperor desired to see Old Rome, with its narrow and crowded streets, destroyed, that he might be able to rebuild it on a new and stately scale, and thus, regardless of the immemorial traditions of the ancient city, to render his name immortal through this notable and magnificent work.

At all events these improbable stories more or less gained credence in many quarters, and the Emperor found himself execrated by thousands of thoughtless men and women who had suffered the loss of their all in the fire, and who were glad to vent their fury on one whom they once admired and even loved, though their admiration and love had been often

mingled with that fierce envy with which the people too frequently view the great and rich and powerful.

Prompted by his evil advisers, among whom the infamous Tigellinus was the most conspicuous, the Emperor in the first instance accused the Jews of being the incendiaries: curiously enough the quarter of the city where they mostly congregated had been spared in the late conflagration. It was no difficult task to persuade the fickle people that the strange race of foreigners, who hated Rome and Rome's gods, had avenged themselves and the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of the Roman nation, by firing the capital city.

Up to this time—in the eyes of most of the Romans—the Jew and the Christian were one people; they considered that if any difference at all existed, it was simply that the Christian was a dissenting Jew. Now apparently, after the burning of Rome, for the first time was any distinction made. It happened on this wise: the Jews had powerful friends in the court of the despotic Emperor. Poppæa the Empress, if not a Jewess, was at least a devoted proselyte of the chosen race. There is no doubt but that her influence, backed up no doubt by others about her person at the court, diverted the suspicions which had been awakened, from the Jews to the Christians. These, it was pointed out, were no real Jews, but were their deadly enemies; they were a hateful and hated sect quite improperly confounded with the chosen people. The Christians were now formally accused of being the real authors of the late calamity, and the accusation seems to have been generally popular among the masses of the Roman population. Our authorities for this popular hatred—we may style them contemporary—are Tacitus and Suetonius and the Christian Clement of Rome. The testimony of Pliny the Younger, who governed Bithynia under the Emperor Trajan, will be discussed later.

Under the orders of Nero—who turned to his own purposes the popular dislike to the new sect of Jewish fanatics, as they generally were supposed to be—the Christians were sought for. It turned out that there was a vast multitude of them in the city, "ingens multitudo," says Tacitus; and Clement of Rome, the Christian bishop and writer, *circa* A.D. 96, also

speaks of their great numbers. Many of the accused were condemned on the false charge of incendiarism, to which was added an accusation far harder to disprove—general hostility to society, and hatred of the world (*odio generis humani*).

A crowd of Christians of both sexes was condemned to the wild beasts. It was arranged that they should provide a hideous amusement for the people who witnessed the games just then about to be celebrated in the imperial gardens on the Vatican Hill—on the very spot where the glorious basilica of S. Peter now stands.

Nero, anxious to restore his waning popularity with the crowd, and to divert the strange suspicion which had fixed upon him as the incendiary of the great fire, was determined that the games should surpass any former exhibition of the like kind in the number of victims provided, and in the refined cruelty of the awful punishment to which the sufferers were condemned. He had in good truth an array of victims for his ghastly exhibition such as had never been seen before. A like exhibition indeed was never repeated; the hideousness of it positively shocking the Roman populace, cruel though they were, and passionately devoted to scenic representations which included death and torture, crime and shame. Numbers of these first Christian martyrs were simply exposed to the beasts; others clothed in skins were hunted down by fierce wild dogs; others were forced to play a part in infamous dramas, which ever closed with the death of the victims in pain and agony.

But the closing scene was the most shocking. As the night fell on the great show, as a novel delight for the populace, the Roman people being especially charmed with brilliant and striking illuminations, the outer ring of the vast arena was encircled with crosses on which a certain number of Christians were bound, impaled, or nailed. The condemned were clothed in tunics steeped in pitch and in other inflammable matter, and then, horrible to relate, the crucified and impaled were set on fire, and in the lurid light of these ghastly living torches the famous chariot races, in which the wicked Emperor took a part, were run.

But *this* was never repeated; as we have just stated,

the sight of the living flambeaux, the protracted agony of the victims, was too dreadful even for that debased and hardened Roman crowd of heedless cruel spectators; the illuminations of Nero's show were never forgotten; they remained an awful memory, but only a memory, even in Rome!

There is good reason to suppose that one of the lookers on at the games of that long day and sombre evening in the gardens of the Vatican Hill was Seneca, the famous Stoic philosopher, once the tutor and afterwards for a time the minister of Nero. Seneca had retired from public life, and in two of his letters written during his retirement to his sick and suffering friend Lucilius, encouraging him to bear his distressing malady with brave patience, reminds him of the tortures which were now and again inflicted on the condemned; in vivid language picturing the fire, the chains, the worrying of wild beasts, the prison horrors, the cross, the tunic steeped in pitch, the rack, the red-hot irons placed on the quivering flesh. What, he asks his friend, are *your* sufferings compared with sufferings caused by these tortures? And yet, he adds, his eyes had seen these things endured; from the sufferer no groan was heard—no cry for mercy—nay, in the midst of all he had seen the bravely patient victims smile!

Surely here the great Stoic was referring to what he had witnessed in Nero's dread games of the Vatican gardens; no other scene would furnish such a memory at once weird and pathetic. The strange ineffable smile of the Christian in pain and agony dying for his God, had gone home to the heart of the great scholar statesman. Like many another Roman citizen of his day and time, Seneca had often seen men die, but he had never before looked on any one dying after this fashion!

From the days of that ever memorable summer of the year 64 until Constantine and Licinius signed the edict which in the name of the Emperors gave peace and stillness to the harassed Church, A.D. 313, roughly speaking a long period of two centuries and a half, the sword of persecution was never sheathed. For practically from the year 64, the date of the famous games in the Vatican gardens, there was a continuous persecution of those that confessed the name of Christ. The

ordinary number of the ten persecutions is after all an arbitrary computation. The whole principle and constitution of Christianity on examination were condemned by the Roman government as irreconcilably hostile to the established order; and mere membership of the sect, if persisted in, was regarded as treasonable, and the confessors of Christianity became liable to the punishment of death. And this remained the unvarying, the changeless policy of the Government of the State, though not always put in force, until the memorable edict of Constantine, A.D. 313.

After the terrible scenes in the games of the Vatican gardens, the persecution of the Christians still continued. The charges of incendiarism were dropped, no one believing that there was any truth in these allegations; but in Rome and in the provinces the Christian sect from this time forward was generally regarded as hostile to the Empire.

The accusation of being the authors of the great fire had revealed many things in connexion with the sect; the arrests, the judicial inquiries, had thrown a flood of new light upon the tenets of the new religion, had disclosed its large and evidently rapidly increasing numbers. Most probably for many years were they still confused with the Jews, but it was seen that the new sect was something more than a mere body of Jewish dissenters.

It was universally acknowledged that the Christians were innocent of any connexion with the great fire; but something else was discovered; they were a very numerous company (*ingens multitudo*) intensely in earnest, opposed to the State religion, preferring in numberless instances torture, confiscation, death, rather than submit to the State regulations in the matter of religion.

For some time before the fire they had been generally disliked, possibly hated by very many of the Roman citizens, by men of different ranks, for various reasons; by traders who lost much by their avoidance of all idolatrous feasts; by pagan families who resented the proselytism which was constantly taking place in their homes, thus causing a breach in the family circle; by priests and those specially connected with the network of rites and ceremonies, sacrifices and offer-

ings belonging to the temples of the old gods. But, after all, this widespread popular dislike to the sect was not the chief cause of the steady persecution which set in after the wild and intemperate scenes which followed the great fire.

For the first time the imperial government saw with whom they had to do. It was the settled policy of Rome steadily to repress and to stamp out all organizations, all self-governing communities, or clubs, as highly dangerous to the spirit of imperial policy; and as the result of the trials and inquiries which followed the fire of Rome, it found in the Christian community a living embodiment of this tendency which hitherto Rome had succeeded in crushing—found that in their midst, in the capital and in the provinces, an extra-imperial unity was fast growing up—an Empire within the Empire.

In other words, the whole of the principles and the constitution of Christianity were considered as hostile to the established order, and if persisted in were to be deemed treasonable; thus after the discoveries made in the course of the judicial proceedings which were instituted after the great fire, the Christians, even after their innocence on the incendiary charge was generally acknowledged, were viewed by the imperial authorities as a politically dangerous society, being an organized and united body having its ramifications all over the Empire; but after the hideous and revolting cruelties to which so many of them had been subjected in the famous Vatican games, the original charge made against them came universally to be considered as an infamous device of the Emperor Nero to divert public attention from himself, to whom, although probably falsely, the guilt of causing the fire was popularly attributed.

Still there is no doubt that although the alleged connexion of the Christian sect with the crime of incendiarism seems to have been quickly forgotten, from the year 64 onward "the persecution was continued as a permanent police measure, under the form of a general prosecution of Christians as a sect dangerous to the public safety."

This, after a lengthened discussion of the whole question, is Professor Ramsay's conclusion,[1] who considers it doubtful

[1] *The Church in the Roman Empire*, xi. 6.

if any " edict," in the strict sense of the word, was promulgated by the Emperor Nero ; and this he deduces from the famous correspondence which took place between Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, and the Emperor Trajan, some fifty years after the events just related in the days of Nero.

The words of Pliny when he asked for more definite directions from Trajan in the matter of Christian prosecutions, apparently indicate that he considered the Christian question not as one coming under some definite law, but as a matter of practical administration.

The more general opinion, however, held by modern Church historians is that an edict against the Christians was promulgated by Nero, and that Domitian specially acted upon the edict in the course of the severe measures taken against the sect in the later years of his reign ; the words of Melito of Sardis (second century), of Tertullian (beginning of third century), of the Christian historians writing in the fourth century and early years of the fifth century Sulpitius Severus and Lactantius, being quoted in support of this view.

The expressions used by Sulpitius Severus here are certainly very definite in the matter of the imperial edict. This historian founds his account of the persecution under Nero on " Tacitus," and then comments as follows : " This was the beginning of severe measures against the Christians. Afterwards the religion was forbidden by formal laws, and the profession of Christianity was made illegal by published edicts " (*Chron.* ii. 29).

It is not, however, of great importance if the profession of Christianity was formally interdicted, or if a persecution was a matter of practical administration, the profession of the faith being considered dangerous to law and order, and deserving of death—as Ramsay supposes. The other conclusion is of far greater moment. It is briefly this :

The first step taken by the imperial government in persecution dates certainly from the reign of Nero, immediately after the scenes in the Vatican games, when a Christian was condemned after evidence had been given that he or she had committed some act of hostility to society—no difficult task to prove. Subsequent to Nero's reign, a further develop-

ment in the persecutions had taken place (probably in the time of Vespasian), in which all Christians were assumed to have been guilty of such hostility to society, and might be condemned off-hand on confession of the Name. This was the state of things when Pliny wrote to Trajan for more detailed instructions. The great number of professing Christians alarming that upright and merciful official, he asked the Emperor was he to send them all to death ?

The leading feature of the instruction of the Emperor Trajan in reply to Pliny's question, as we shall presently see, was, although Christians were to be condemned if they confessed the Name, they were not to be sought out. This "instruction" held good until the closing years of the Empire, when a sterner policy was pursued ; while it is indisputable that under Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, a yet more hostile practice was adopted towards the Christians.

One great point is clear—that from the days of Nero the Christians were never safe ; they lived as their writings plainly show, even under the rule of those Emperors who were, comparatively speaking, well disposed to them, with the vision of martyrdom ever before their eyes ; they lived, not a few of them, positively training themselves to endure the great trial as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. During the first and second centuries, comparatively speaking, only a few names of these martyrs and confessors have come down to us : we possess but a few really well authenticated recitals (Acts and Passions), but these names and stories do not read like exceptional cases ;[1] irresistibly the grave truth forces itself upon us, that there were many heroes and heroines whose names have *not* been preserved—whose stories have not been recorded.

The sword of persecution ever hung over the heads of the members of the Christian flocks—ready to fall at any moment. The stern instructions, modified though they were by the kindly policy of some of the rulers of the State, were never abrogated, never forgotten ; they were susceptible, it is true, of a gentler interpretation than the harsh terms in which they were couched at first seemed to warrant,

[1] This comment cannot be pressed too strongly.

but these interpretations constantly varied according to the policy of the provincial magistrate and the tone for the moment of the reigning Emperor; but we must never think of the spirit of persecution really slumbering even for one short year.

III

SILENCE RESPECTING PERSECUTION

IT has been asked, How comes it that for much of the first and second centuries there is a remarkable silence respecting these persecutions which we are persuaded harassed the Christian congregations in the provinces as in the great metropolis? The answer here is not difficult to find.

The pagan writers of these centuries held the Christian sect in deep contempt;[1] they would never think the punishments dealt out to a number of law-breakers and wild fanatics worthy of chronicling; the mere loss of life in that age, so accustomed to wholesale destruction of human beings, would not strike them as a notable incident in any year.

While as regards Christian records, the practice of celebrating the anniversary days of even famous martyrs and confessors only began in Rome far on in the third century.

But, as we shall see, although we possess no Christian records definitely telling us of any special persecution between the times of Nero and the later years of Domitian, the pages of the undoubtedly genuine Christian writings of very early date, from which we shall presently quote, were unmistakably all written under the shadow of a restless relentless hostility on the part of the Roman government towards the Christian sect. The followers of Jesus we see ever lived under the shadow of persecution.

Never safe for a single day was the life of one who believed in the Name; his life and the life of his dear ones were never for an instant secure: he and his family were at the mercy of every enemy, open and secret. Confiscation, degradation

[1] It is this which makes the vivid picture which the younger Pliny, in his Letter to Trajan, paints of Christian life and influence in a great province so valuable.

from rank and position, banishment, imprisonment, torture, death, were ever threatening him. A hard, stern combat, indeed, was the daily life of every Christian disciple. Many came out as victors from the terrible trial; this we learn from such writings as the *Shepherd* of Hermas, but some, alas! we learn from that same vivid and truthful picture of Hermas, flinched and played the traitor when the hour of decision between Christ and the pagan gods struck, as it often, very often, did in the so-called quiet days of the Flavian Emperors.

But it is only from the general character and spirit of the early Christian writers that we gather this; it is only from the allusions scattered up and down these striking and pathetic pages, which after all had other and nobler work before them than to record the many sufferings and martyrdoms of the brethren, that we learn what was the character of the hard life the followers of Jesus had to lead. So far from exaggerating, these writers give a very imperfect account of the sufferings of that period.

But in spite of this dark shadow of danger under which the Christian always lived, a cloud which for two hundred and fifty years never really lifted; in spite of popular dislike and of public condemnation,—the numbers of the persecuted sect multiplied with startling rapidity in all lands, among all the various peoples massed together under the rule of the Empire, and called by the name of Romans. Their great number attracted the attention of pagan writers such as Tacitus, writing of the martyrdoms of A.D. 64; of Pliny, speaking of what he witnessed in A.D. 112; of Christian writers like Tertullian, giving a picture of the sect at the end of the second century.

In the middle years of this second century, only a little more than a hundred years after the Resurrection morning, when the Antonines were reigning, we know that there were large congregations in Spain and Gaul, in Germany, in North Africa, in Egypt and in Syria, besides the great and powerful Church in Rome.

All that we learn of the busy, earnest, strenuous life of these early Christian communities, of their noble charities, of their active propaganda, of their grave and successful contentions

with the heretical teachers who successively arose in their midst, makes it hard to believe that they were ever living, as it were, under the very shadow of persecution which might burst upon them at any moment; and yet well-nigh all the writings of these early days are coloured with these anticipations of torture, confiscation, imprisonment, and death,—a death of pain and agony. The Apocalypse refers to these things again and again—Clement of Rome in his grave and measured Epistle—Hermas and Ignatius, Justin and Tertullian, and somewhat later Cyprian writing in the middle of the third century — allude to these things as part of the everyday Christian life. They give us, it is true, few details, little history of the events which were constantly happening; but as we read, we feel that the thought of martyrdom was constantly present with them.

Now what was the attraction to this Christianity, the profession of which was so fraught with danger — so surrounded with deadly peril?

"Le candidat au Christianisme, était, par le fait même, candidat au Martyre," graphically writes the brilliant and careful French scholar Duchesne. The Christian verily exposed himself and his dear ones to measureless penalties. Now what had he to gain by such a dangerous adventure?

It is true that martyrdom itself possessed a special attraction for some. The famous chapters of Ignatius' Letter to the Roman Church, written *circa* A.D. 109–10, very vividly picture this strange charm. The constancy of the confessor, the calm serenity with which he endured tortures, the smiling confidence with which he welcomed a death often of pain and suffering—his eyes fixed upon something invisible to mortal eyes which he saw immediately before him,—all this was new in the world of Rome; it was at once striking and admirable. Such a sight, and it was a frequent one, was indeed inspiring—"Why should not I," thought many a believer in Jesus, "share in this glorious future? Why should not I form one of this noble band of elect and blessed souls?"

Then again another attraction to Christianity was ever

present in the close union which existed among the members of the community.

In this great Brotherhood, without any attempt to level down the wealthier Christians, without any movement towards establishing a general community of goods, the warmest feelings of friendship and love were cultivated between all classes and degrees. The Christian teachers pointed out with great force that in the eyes of the divine Master no difference existed between the slave and the free-born, between the patrician and the little trader; with Him there was perfect equality. Sex and age, rank and fortune, poverty and riches, country and race, with Him were of no account. All men and women who struggled after the life He loved, were His dear servants. The result of all this was shown in the generous and self-denying love of the wealthier members of the flock towards their poor and needy brothers and sisters.

This is conspicuously shown in the wonderful story of the vast cemeteries of the suburbs of Rome, where at a very early date the rich afforded the hospitality of the tomb to their poor friends.

Most of the so-called "catacombs" began in the gardens of the rich and noble, where the little family God's acre was speedily opened to the proletariat and the slave, who after death were tenderly and lovingly cared for, and laid to sleep with all reverence alongside the members of the patrician house to whom the cemetery belonged, and which in numberless instances was enlarged to receive these poor and humble guests.

But, after all, great and different though these various attractive influences were,—and which no doubt in countless cases brought unnumbered men and women of all ranks and orders into the ranks of Christianity,—there was something more which united all these various nationalities, these different grades, with an indissoluble bond of union; something more which enabled them to live on year after year in the shadow of persecution—in daily danger of losing all that men most prize and hold dear; something more which gave them that serene courage at the last, which inspired the great army of bravely

patient martyrs to witness a good confession for the Name's sake. It was that burning, that living faith in the great sacrifice of their loving Master—the faith which in the end vanquished even pagan Rome—the faith which comes from no books or arguments, no preaching and no persuasion—from no learning however profound and sacred — from no human arsenal, however furnished with truth and righteousness.

It was that strong and deathless faith which is the gift of God alone, and which in a double portion was the gift of the Holy Ghost to the sorely tried Church in the heroic age of Christianity.

After the death of Nero, during the very brief reigns of Galba Otho and Vitellius, probably the persecution of Christians owing to the disturbed state of Rome and the Empire, languished. When, however, the Flavian House in the person of Vespasian was firmly placed in power, the policy of the government of Nero, which held that the Christians were a sect the tendency of whose beliefs and practice was hostile to the very foundations and established principles of the Roman government, was strictly adhered to, and possibly even developed.

The followers of the sect were deemed outlaws, and the name of a Christian was treated as a crime.

There is a famous passage in Sulpicius Severus (fourth century) which most modern scholars consider to have been an extract from a lost book of Tacitus. It is an account of a Council of War held after the storming of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. In this Council, Titus the son and heir of Vespasian—the hero of the great campaign which closed with the fall of Jerusalem—is reported to have expressed the opinion that the Temple ought to be destroyed in order that the religion of the Jews and of the Christians might be more completely rooted up; for these religions, though opposed to each other, had yet the same origin. The Christians had sprung from the Jews, and when the root was torn up the stem issuing from the root would easily be destroyed. There is no doubt but that this report of Titus' speech at the Council of War is an historical

document of the utmost importance. It tells us exactly what was the feeling of the imperial Flavian House towards the Christians—they represented an evil which it was well to extirpate.

It is possible that in a mutilated passage of Suetonius a reference occurs to Vespasian's actions at this period (in the year following A.D. 70) in respect to the Christians. The passage runs as follows: "Never in the death of any one did Vespasian (take pleasure, and in the case of) merited punishments he even wept and groaned." This is clearly a reference to some class of individuals whose punishment Vespasian felt bound to accept, while he regretted it. "It is inconceivable that Vespasian, a Roman soldier of long experience in the bloody wars of Britain and Judæa, wept and groaned at every merited execution. . . . We think of the punishments which by the principle of Nero attached to the Christians . . . the principle in question continued permanently, and Suetonius alluded to it on account of the detail, interesting to a biographer, that Vespasian wept while he confirmed its operation." [1]

But a yet more precise statement, that persecution was actively continued under Vespasian, is to be found in the Latin Father, Hilary of Poitiers, who ranks Vespasian between Nero and Decius as a persecutor of the Faith.[2] Some critics have supposed this notice an error. Lightfoot, however, thinks it more probable that it was based upon some facts of history known to Hilary, but since blotted out by time from the records of history.[3]

Towards the end of Domitian's reign, *circa* A.D. 95, the persecution became more bitter. Indeed, so severely were the Christians hunted out and prosecuted that the period had become memorable in history. Domitian is constantly men-

[1] See Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, xii. 2.

[2] See Hilary (Poitiers), *Contra Arianos*, 3.

[3] Bishop Lightfoot discusses at some length the great probability of the accuracy of this definite statement of S. Hilary of Poitiers, and decides that the absence of any mention of Vespasian among the persecutors in Melito and Tertullian by no means invalidates Hilary's mention; no systematic record was kept of the persecutions; the knowledge possessed by each individual writer was accidental and fragmentary. Lightfoot, *Ignatius and Polycarp*, vol. i. pp. 15, 16.

tioned as the second great persecutor, Nero being the first. The reason doubtless for this general tradition is that in A.D. 95, persons of the highest rank, some even belonging to the imperial family, were among the condemned; notably Flavius Clemens the Consul, and the two princesses bearing the name of Domitilla—all these being very near relatives of the Emperor.

The violent outbreak of persecution, fierce and terrible as it seems to have been in the last year and a half of Domitian's reign, does not appear to have been owing to any special movement among the Christian subjects of the Empire which aroused attention and suggested distrust, but was solely owing to the Emperor's private policy and personal feelings. There is nothing to show that any edict against the sect was promulgated in this reign. Since the time of Nero the persecution of Christians was a standing matter, as was that of persons who were habitual law-breakers, robbers, and such like. Probably under the princes of the Flavian dynasty, as we have said, this policy of the government was somewhat developed throughout the Empire, and now and again, owing to local circumstances and the disposition of the chief magistrate, was more or less severe. It is said that some governors boasted that they had brought back from their province their lictors' axes unstained with blood; but others were actuated with very different feelings.

In the case of the so-called Domitian persecution, the ill-will of the autocratic Emperor naturally intensified it. Various motives seem to have influenced the sovereign Lord of the Empire here.

Domitian was a sombre and suspicious tyrant, and no doubt his cruel action in the case of his relatives, the consul Flavius and the princesses of his House, was prompted by jealousy of those who stood nearest his throne, and the fact that they were found to belong to the proscribed sect gave him a pretext of which he was glad to avail himself. But his bloody vengeance was by no means only wreaked upon his own relatives. We learn from the pagan writer Dion Cassius (in the epitome of his work by the monk Xiphilin) and also from Suetonius, that he put to death various persons of high position, notably Acilius Glabrio who had been consul in A.D. 91.

This Acilius Glabrio was also a Christian. The researches and discoveries of De Rossi and Marruchi in the older portion of the vast Catacomb of S. Priscilla have conclusively proved this.

There was another reason, however, for Domitian's special hatred of the Christian sect. The Emperor was a vigilant censor, and an austere guardian of the ancient Roman traditions. In this respect he has with some justice been cited as pursuing the same policy as did his great predecessor Augustus, and, like him, he looked on the imperial cultus[1] as part of the State religion. Domitian felt that these ancient traditions which formed a part of Roman life were compromised by the teaching and practices of the Christian sect. No doubt this was one of the principal reasons which influenced him in his active persecution of the followers of Jesus.

But although he struck at some of the noblest and most highly placed in the Empire, especially, as it seems, those suspected of being members of the hated sect, he appears to have vented his fury also upon many who belonged to the lower classes of the citizens. Juvenal in a striking passage evidently alludes to his pursuit of these comparatively unknown and obscure ones, and traces the unpopularity which eventually led to his assassination to this persecution of the poor nameless citizen.[2]

[1] "Domitian loved to be identified with Jupiter, and to be idolized as the Divine Providence in human form; and it is recorded that Caligula, Domitian, and Diocletian were the three Emperors who delighted to be styled *dominus et deus*."

[2] He struck (says the Roman poet), without exciting popular indignation, at the illustrious citizen:

> "Tempora sævitiæ, claras quibus abstulit Urbi
> Illustresque animas impune, et vindice nullo."

But when his rage touched the people—he fell:

> "Sed periit, postquam cerdonibus esse timendus
> cœperat" . . . (Juvenal, iv. 151–4).

The word *cerdones* included the poorest and humblest artisans. The word is commonly translated "cobblers"—French *savetiers*; it is usually applied to the slave class, or to those engaged in the poorest industries.

Allard (*Histoire des Persécutions*, i. 11, chap. iv.) considers that the disgust and pity of the populace when they saw the horrible cruelties practised in the celebrated games of Nero in A.D. 64, were partly owing to the indignation

Domitian was assassinated A.D. 96, and was succeeded by the good and gentle Emperor Nerva. The active and bitter persecution which Domitian carried on in the latter years of his reign, as far as we know, ceased, and once more the Christian sect was left in comparative quiet, that is to say, they were still in the position of outlaws, the sword of persecution ever hanging over their heads. The law which forbade their very existence was there, if any one was disposed to call it into action. The passion of the populace, the bigotry of a magistrate, or the malice of some responsible personage, might at any moment awake the slumbering law into activity. These various malicious influences, ever ready, were constantly setting the law in motion. This we certainly gather from Pliny's reference to the "Cognitiones" or inquiries into accusations set on foot against Christians in his famous letter to the Emperor Trajan.

of the people when they perceived that so many of their own class were among the tormented Christians in that horrible massacre.

Aubé, too, in his *Histoire des Persécutions*, calls special attention to these lines of Juvenal. He connects the murder of Domitian closely with the indignation aroused among the people by this bitter persecution, and suggests that the plot which resulted in the assassination of the tyrant originated in a Christian centre. This is, however, in the highest degree improbable.

PART III

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PLINY AND TRAJAN

PLINY'S LETTER TO TRAJAN AND THE EMPEROR'S "RESCRIPT"—GENUINENESS OF CORRESPONDENCE

Introductory

A FLOOD of light is poured upon the early history of Christianity in the correspondence which passed between the Emperor Trajan and his friend and minister Pliny the Younger, who had been appointed to the governorship [1] of Bithynia and Pontus, the district lying in the north of Asia Minor.

The letter of Pliny, containing his report of the trial and inquiry into the matter of the accused Christians of his province, and asking for direction, was written to the Emperor Trajan in the autumn of A.D. III; and the reply of Trajan, which contained the famous *rescript* concerning the Christian sect—an ordinance which regulated the action of the government of Rome towards the disciples of Jesus for many long years—was dispatched a few months later.

The correspondence was quoted and commented upon at some length by the Latin Father Tertullian before the close of the second century. Eusebius again refers to it, translating the quotations of Tertullian from a Greek version of the celebrated Christian Father.[2]

[1] The full official title of Pliny the Younger in this governorship was "Legatus proprætore provinciæ Ponti et Bithyniæ consulari potestate." That eminent statesman was entrusted with this province mainly on account of its needing special attention at that time.

[2] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 2; Eusebius, *H. E.* III. xxxii. 33.

For various reasons, some critics have thrown doubt upon the genuineness of these two famous letters. The main cause of the hesitation in receiving them is the strong evidence contained in the correspondence bearing upon the existence and influence and great numbers of the Christian sect at the beginning of the second century. That a *pagan* author should supply us with the information—and especially a pagan author of the rank and position which the younger Pliny held—the adversaries of the Faith misliked.

These very doubts, however, as in other cases of doubt respecting the authenticity of some of our Christian and pagan writings bearing on the facts of very early Christianity, have established the genuineness of the pieces in question, the doubts requiring an answer, and the answer involving a careful and thoughtful investigation. It is singular, in their scarcely veiled hostility to the religion of Jesus, how some scholars attempt to discredit all the references to the Christians in early heathen writers.

In this case the investigation has completely proved the genuineness of the correspondence in question. Bishop Lightfoot, in the course of his thorough and scholarly examination, does not hesitate to write that the genuineness of the important Letters "can now only be questioned by a scepticism bordering on insanity."

Amongst other critics who completely brush away all doubts here, he quotes Aldus Manutius, Mommsen, and the French writer (no friend to Christianity) Renan. The same view is also unhesitatingly taken by Allard and Boissier in France, and Ramsay in England. In any controversy which may arise here obviously the attestation of Tertullian in the last years of the century in which the Letters were written is of the highest value.[1]

[1] Lightfoot well observes (*Apostolic Fathers*, part ii. vol. i., S. Ignatius, pp. 54–6) that these two famous letters cannot be separated from the collection of Pliny's Letters in which they appear. Renan in *Les Évangiles* writes: "On ne croira jamais qu'un faussaire Chrétien eut pu si admirablement imiter la langue précieuse et raffinée de Pline."

Lightfoot further asks, what Christian writer, if bent on forgery, would have confessed that crowds of his fellow-believers had denied their faith . . . that the persecution was already refilling the heathen temples which before

were nearly empty, and that there was good hope, if the same policy of persecution was pursued, of a general apostasy from Christianity ensuing? Several, too, of the statements concerning the practices of Christians betray only a very imperfect knowledge of the practices referred to.

The passage which, however, has excited the greatest suspicion and animosity is that which relates to the great *numbers* of the Christians; but it must be remembered that Tacitus had already spoken of "a vast multitude" as suffering at Rome in the persecution of the Emperor Nero.

I

THE CHARACTER OF TRAJAN

WHEN Domitian was assassinated, and Nerva was proclaimed Emperor, a new spirit was introduced into the occupants of the imperial dignity. Nerva represented the old conservative and aristocratic spirit of the Roman Senate. He only reigned a short two years, but his great act was the association in the supreme power of one who in all respects would and could carry out the ancient traditions of Roman government, of which Nerva was a true representative.

Nerva died early in 98, and his associate Trajan at once became sole Emperor. In many respects this Trajan was the greatest of the despotic masters who in succession ruled the Roman world. At once a renowned soldier and a far-seeing statesman, his complex personality is admirably and tersely summed up by Allard (*Histoire des Persécutions*, i. 145), who writes of him: "On eût cru voir le sénat romain lui-même prenant une âme guerrière et montant sur le trône."

. . . . . .

As a rule, writers of sacred history treat the memory of Trajan with great gentleness. The Christian writers in the second half of the second century shrink from seeing in him a persecutor of the Church. They were, of course, biassed in their judgment, being loth to think of a great Emperor like Trajan as a persecutor of their religion. As we have already remarked, the written Acts of Martyrs were very few during the first and second centuries; and the name and memory of the earliest brave confessors of the Name, save in a few very notable instances, quietly and quickly faded away; so the recollections of the second-century Fathers in the matter of the State policy in the past, with regard to Christianity, were somewhat vague and uncertain. Later, in the early and middle

years of the fourth century, Eusebius, though in his time the fact of continuous persecution in the past had become generally known, tries to exculpate the memory of Trajan as a persecutor, but with very doubtful success.

This favourable and somewhat generous view of Trajan held its own through the early Middle Ages. A striking and beautiful story illustrative of these estimates is told of Pope Gregory the Great (A.D. 590–604) by both his biographers, Paul the Deacon (close of eighth century) and John the Deacon (close of ninth century). The Bishop of Rome once, walking through the Forum of Trajan, was attracted by a sculptured bas-relief representing the great Emperor showing pity to a poor aged widow whose only son had perished through the violence of the Emperor's soldiers.

Struck by this proof of the just and loving nature of Trajan, the Pope, kneeling at the tomb of S. Peter, prayed earnestly that mercy might be showed to the great pagan emperor. The prayer, so runs the story, was granted; and it was revealed to Gregory that the soul of Trajan was released from torment in answer to his intercession. The beauty and noble charity which colour the legend are, however, spoiled and marred by the words of the traditional revelation which follow. The generous Pope, while hearing that his prayers were granted, was warned never again to presume to pray for those who had died without holy baptism.

Not a few modern scholars, however, read the famous interposition of Trajan at the time of Pliny's request for guidance as manifesting a hostile spirit towards Christianity; so, to quote a few of the better-known writers, interpret Gieseler, Overbach, Aubé, Friedlander, Uhlhorn, etc., while Renan (*Les Évangiles*) perhaps more accurately writes: "Trajan fut le premier persécuteur systématique de Christianisme"; and again, "à partir de Trajan le Christianisme est un crime."

The truth, however, really lies between these two divergent opinions. The "rescript" of Trajan promulgated no *new* law on the subject of the treatment of the Christian believers. It evidently presupposed the existence of a law, and that a very stern and very harsh mode of procedure. From

it Trajan neither subtracted anything *nor* added anything; still, as has been very justly said, the humane and upright character of the Emperor and his minister Pliny—Pliny, by his evident, though carefully veiled, advice and suggestions based upon his protracted inquiries into the tenets and customs of the sect; Trajan, by his formal imperial "rescript"—secured some considerable mitigation in its enforcement.

The story of the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan, which was fraught with such momentous consequences to the Christians of Rome and the Empire generally, is as follows:

When Pliny, about the middle of the year 111, came to the scene of his government,—the provinces of Bithynia and Pontus,—apparently somewhat to his surprise he found a very considerable portion of the population members of the Christian community. The religion professed by these people, Pliny was well aware, was unlawful in the eyes of the State, and the sect generally was unpopular; and evil rumours were current respecting its traditional practices.

The new governor knew of the existence of the sect in Rome, but little more. He was clearly aware that these Christians had been the object of many State persecutions and judicial inquiries, "cognitiones" he terms them, and no doubt knew something, too, of the public severity with which these adherents of an unlawful religion had been treated by the State when convicted of the crime of Christianity.

The horrors of the amphitheatre in the case of these condemned ones could not have been unknown to one like Pliny. But the great world in which Pliny lived and moved and worked, cared little for human life or human suffering in the case of a despised and outlawed community.

The Roman teacher and patrician of the days of Trajan held human life very cheaply. The amphitheatre games, to take one phase only of Roman life in the days of the Empire, were an evil education for Rome. The execution, the sufferings of a few score Christian outlaws, however frequently repeated, would attract very little attention in Pliny's world.

But now in his new government he was brought face to face with grave difficulties occasioned by the practices and teaching of this Christianity. And when he discovered in addition how numerous a body these followers of the forbidden religion were, Pliny set himself in good earnest to investigate the Christian question.

More than fifty years had passed since S. Peter first preached the gospel and laid the foundation stories of the Christian Church in these northern provinces of Asia Minor. The religion of Jesus had rapidly taken root in these districts. This we gather from the First Epistle of Peter, which he wrote to the followers of Jesus in the north of Asia Minor from Rome in the closing years of his ministry; and now Pliny found in his province no novel faith growing up, but a faith which had taken deep root in the hearts of the population, not only in the towns, but also in the more remote villages (*neque enim civitates tantum sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est*), with the result that the old pagan cult was being gradually abandoned. The temples were being fast deserted (*prope jam desolata templa*), the sacred rites were being given up, and what evidently excited bitter complaints on the part of the traders who suffered, there was no longer any market for the fodder of the beasts sacrificed (*pastum . . . victimarum quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur*).

From the report of Pliny to the Emperor, it is evident that there had been several judicial inquiries (*cognitiones*), conducted by him as the responsible governor of Bithynia and Pontus, into the charges brought against the adherents of the unlawful faith.

In the first "cognitio" the more prominent Christians were brought before him. These all at once avowed their religion. Three times they were interrogated by Pliny. As they persisted in the avowal that they were Christians, the provincials were at once condemned to death. Those who claimed Roman citizenship were sent to Rome for their sentences to be confirmed.

The publicity of these first inquiries stimulated further accusations; various degrees of guilt were alleged, and subse-

quently an anonymous paper was put before the governor implicating a whole crowd of persons.

Of these, some denied that they were, or ever had been, Christians. These, on offering incense before the image of the Emperor and cursing Christ, were at once liberated.

Others confessed, but professed repentance. These he reserved for the decision of the Emperor. It is not explicitly said that of this second and larger group of " accused," some persisted in their adherence to the " Name." There is no doubt that such were treated as in the first group, some being put to death; others, as Roman citizens, reserved for the imperial decision.

It was then that Pliny, especially disturbed at the numbers of accused Christians, determined upon a more searching investigation into the manners and customs of these numerous adherents of the unlawful religion. He would learn for himself more of the " detestable " rites and other crimes with which these persons were charged.

Two Christian deaconesses are mentioned as being examined under torture; others were closely questioned, and the result of the inquiries to Pliny was startling.

He satisfied himself that the monstrous charges were absolutely unproven. All their rites were simple, perfectly harmless, and unostentatious. Pliny in the course of his inquiry found that they were in the habit of meeting together, on a day appointed, before sunrise; that they would then sing together a hymn to Christ as God; that they would bind themselves by a solemn vow—*sacramentum* (Pliny was evidently not aware that the *sacramentum* in question was the Holy Eucharist; indeed the whole narrative is evidently told by one who very imperfectly grasped the Christian idea, although it is strangely accurate in many of the details). The purport of the vow was that they would commit neither theft nor adultery; that they would never break their word; never betray a trust committed to them.

The just magistrate was evidently deeply impressed with the result of his careful and searching examinations. This strange sect, he was convinced, was absolutely innocent of all those dark offences with which they were commonly charged—

like another and more sadly notorious Roman judge sitting in another and more awful judgment-scene, who after hearing the case, *from that time sought to release the pale prisoner before him.* So at once after hearing the Christian story, Pliny too, convinced of the perfect innocence of the accused, altered his opinion concerning Christians; but for State reasons would not release them, and while acquitting them of all wrong-doing, in the ordinary sense of the word, chose to see an evil and exaggerated superstition colouring all their works and days.[1] Innocent though they were of anything approaching crime in the ordinary sense of the term, the Roman magistrate deemed the inflexible obstinacy of the Christian deserved the severest punishment that could be inflicted, even death; for when the individual Christian in question was examined, he proved to be immovable on questions of vital importance. He refused to swear by the genius of the Emperor. He would not scatter the customary grains of incense on the altar of Rome and Augustus, or of any of the pagan gods. His religious offence was inextricably bound up with the political offence. He stood, as it had been well expressed, self-convicted of "impiety," of "atheism," of "high treason."

Still, after all these points had been taken into consideration, there is no doubt that Pliny was deeply moved by what he learned from his close examination of the Christian cause; and this new, this gentle, this more favourable estimate of his concerning the "outlawed" sect of Christians, was scarcely veiled in his official report of the case when he asked for the Emperor Trajan's advice and direction.

He was, we learn, especially induced to write to the Emperor when he became aware of *the vast numbers* of Christians who had been, or were about to be, brought before his tribunal. The numbers of the accused evidently appalled him. How would the Emperor wish him to deal with such a multitude?

Very brief but very clear was the answer of Trajan to his friend and confidant the governor of Bithynia and Pontus. This answer contained the famous imperial "rescript"—which

[1] "Sed nihil aliud inveni, quam superstitionem pravam et immodicam." Pliny, *Ep.* x. 96.

in the matter of the Christians was "to run" not only in Rome itself, but in all the provinces of the wide Empire, and which, as is well known, guided the State persecution of Christians for many a long year.

The "rescript" bore unmistakably the impress of Pliny's mind on the subject; and severe though it was, it inaugurated a gentler and more favourable interpretation of the stern law in the case of convicted Christians than had prevailed from the days of Nero onward.

The following are the principal points of the "rescript." In the first place—and this point must be pressed—*no fresh law* authorizing any special persecution of the Christians was needed or even suggested by Pliny. They had evidently for a long period, apparently from the days of Nero, been classed as outlaws (*hostes publici*) and enemies to the fundamental principles of law and order, and the mere acknowledgment on the part of the accused of the name Christian was sufficient in itself to warrant an immediate condemnation to death.

Trajan's reply, which constituted the famous rescript, was studiedly brief, eminently courteous, but imperious and decisive. The friendly bias of Pliny's report and unmistakably favourable opinion of the Christian sect, lives along every line.

He begins with a few graceful words approving Pliny's action in the matter. ("Actum quem debuisti mi Secunde . . . secutus es.")

Then follow the stern, unalterable words which attach the penalty of death to any person who persisted in claiming the name of Christian.

But extenuating circumstances, such as youth, may be taken into account, if the magistrate please to do so.

Any approach to repentance, accompanied with compliance with the law of the Empire, in the matter of offering incense on the pagan altars, is to be accepted, and the offender at once is to be pardoned.

The magistrate is by no means to search for Christians; but if a formal accusation be made by an open accuser, then inquiry must follow; and if the accused recognizes the

justice of the charge, and declines to recant, then *death must* follow.

The accusation of an anonymous person, however, must *never* be received; the Emperor adding his strongest condemnation of all anonymous denunciations. "This kind of thing does not," writes Trajan, "belong to our age and time."

Tertullian (closing years of second century) quotes and sharply criticizes Trajan's "rescript." He writes somwehat as follows: "What a contradictory pronouncement it is. The Emperor forbids the Christians should be searched for—he therefore looks on them surely as innocent persons; and then he directs that if any are brought before the tribunal, they must be punished with death as though they were guilty ones! In the same breath he spares them and rages against them. He stultifies himself; for if Christians are to be condemned as Christians, why are they not to be searched for? If, on the other hand, they are to be considered as innocent persons and in consequence not to be searched for, why not acquit them at once when they appear before the tribunal? . . . You condemn an accused Christian, yet you forbid him to be inquired after. So punishment is inflicted, not because he is guilty, but because he has been discovered,—though anything which might bring him to light is forbidden." (Apology 2.)

The brilliant and eloquent Latin Father, with the acuteness of a trained and skilful lawyer, lays bare the illogical character of the imperial rescript. The truth was that after carefully weighing the facts laid before him by Pliny, the Emperor clearly recognized that such an organization—so far-reaching, so numerous and powerful, was contrary to the established principles of Roman government. The Christian sect must be discouraged, and if possible suppressed; but Trajan saw at the same time that the spirit of the Christians, their teaching and practice, were absolutely innocent, even morally excellent; so he shrank from logically carrying out the severe measures devised by the Roman government in such cases. In other words, his really noble and generous nature prevented him sanctioning the wholesale destruction which a strictly logical interpretation of the Roman law would have brought upon a very numerous body of his subjects.

But in spite of the evident goodwill of the great Emperor and his eminent lieutenant, the sword of persecution was left hanging over the heads of the Christian sect suspended by a very slender cord. How often the slender cord snapped is told in the tragic story of the Christians in the pagan empire during the two hundred years which followed the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan.

The information supplied by these Letters respecting Christianity at the beginning of the second century, emanating as they do from so trusted a statesman, so distinguished a writer, as the younger Pliny, supplemented by a State communication containing an imperial rescript of far-reaching importance from the hands of one of the greatest of the Roman Emperors, is so weighty that it seems to call for a slightly more detailed notice than the particulars which appear in the foregoing pages of this work.

There is no doubt but that "Letters" such as those written by Pliny during the eventful period extending from the days of the Dictatorship of Julius Cæsar to the reign of Honorius—a period roughly of some four hundred and fifty years—occupied in the literature of Rome a singular and important position.

They were in many cases most carefully prepared and designed for a far larger "public" than is commonly supposed. Long after the death of the writer these Letters, gathered together and "published" as far as literary works could be published in those ages when no printing-press existed—were read and re-read, admired and criticized, by very many in the capital and in the provinces.

The first great Letter writer undoubtedly was Cicero, who flourished as a statesman, an orator, and a most distinguished writer from the days of the first consulship of Pompey and Crassus, in 70 B.C., down to the December of 43 B.C., when he was murdered during the proscription of the Triumvirate.

Of the multifarious works of the great orator, possibly the most generally interesting is the collection of his Letters, a large portion of which have come down to us.

The art of "Letter-writing" suddenly arose in Cicero's

hands in Rome to its full perfection. It has been well and truly said that all the great letter-writers of subsequent ages have more or less consciously or unconsciously followed the model of Cicero.

But it was in the Roman Empire that the fashion was most generally adopted; of course, in common with so much of classical literature, the majority of this interesting and suggestive literature has perished, but some of it—perhaps the best portion of it—has survived. The great name of Seneca is specially connected with this form of literature. L. Annæus Seneca wrote the *Epistolæ Morales*, probably "publishing" the first three books himself *circa* A.D. 57. Among these precious reliquiæ the "Letters of Pliny," including his famous Letter to Trajan and the response, are very highly prized by the historian and annalist.

The younger Pliny was the nephew and adopted son of the elder Pliny. He was a successful lawyer, and was highly trained in all branches of literature. During his brilliant career he filled most of the public offices of State in turn, and in the end became consul. Of the Emperor Trajan he was the trusted and intimate friend. Trajan appointed him, as we have seen, imperial legate of Bithynia and Pontus, and when holding this important post the famous correspondence between the Emperor and his friend took place. Pliny died some time before his imperial master, not many years after the famous letter respecting the Christians in his province was written.

His was a charming character,—kindly, beneficent, charitable,—deeply impressed with the grave responsibilities of his position and fortune. Carefully educated and trained under the auspices of the elder Pliny,—a profound scholar and one of the most weighty writers of the early Empire,—the younger Pliny, as he is generally called, won distinction at a comparatively early age as a forensic orator. He became Prætor at the age of thirty-one. During the reign of Domitian, however, he took no share in public life. Under Nerva he again was employed in the State service. Trajan loved and trusted him, and we read of Pliny being consul in A.D. 100. He subsequently obtained the government of the great provinces of

Bithynia and Pontus, and during his tenure of office there must be dated the correspondence between Trajan and Pliny which has come down to us as the tenth Book of the " Letters of Pliny."

This Pliny has been described as the kindliest of Roman gentlemen, but he was far more than that. He was a noble example of the trained and cultured patrician, an ardent and industrious worker, an honest and honourable statesman of no mean ability,—very learned, ambitious only of political distinction when he felt that high rank and authority gave him ampler scope to serve his country and his fellows. He was, we learn from his own writings, by no means a solitary specimen of the chivalrous and noble men who did so much to build up the great Empire, and to render possible that far-reaching " Pax Romana " which for so many years gave prosperity and a fair amount of happiness to the world known under the immemorial name of Rome.

What we know of Pliny and his friends goes far to modify the painful impressions of Roman society of the first two centuries which we gather from the pages of Juvenal and other writers, who have painted their pictures of Roman life in the first and second centuries of the Christian era in such lurid and gloomy colours.

It is in the " Letters of Pliny " that the real story of his life and work has come down to us. These letters are no ordinary or chance collection. They are a finished work of great deliberation and thought.

About a century and a half earlier, the large collection of Cicero's correspondence was given to an admiring and regretful world. A renowned statesman, a matchless orator, and even greater, the creator of the Latin language, which became a universal language—the Letters of Cicero set, as it were, a new fashion in literature. They were really the first in this special form of writing which at once became popular.

The younger Pliny was a pupil of Quintilian, who was for a long period—certainly for twenty years—the most celebrated teacher in the capital. Quintilian is known as the earliest of the Ciceronians. The cult of Ciceronianism established by

Quintilian, Pliny's tutor, was the real origin of the wonderful Pliny Letters.

Pliny was one of the ablest scholars of his age. He, like many of his countrymen, was ambitious of posthumous fame—he would not be forgotten. He was proud of his position—of his forensic oratory—of his statesmanship—of his various literary efforts; but he was too far-seeing to dream of any of his efforts in forensic oratory, or in the service of the State, or even in his various literary adventures which amused his leisure hours, winning him that posthumous fame which in common with so many other earnest pagan Romans he longed for.[1]

Pliny was an ardent admirer of Cicero; but Cicero the statesman and the orator, he felt, moved on too high a plane for him to aim at emulating; but as a writer of Latin, as a chronicler of his own day and time, as a word-painter of the society in which he moved, he might possibly reach as high a pitch of excellence as Cicero had reached in his day.

To accomplish this end became the great object of Pliny's life. To this we owe the inimitable series of Letters by which the friend and minister of Trajan has lived, and will live on.

In some respects the Letters of Pliny are even more valuable than the voluminous and many-coloured correspondence of Cicero. Cicero lived in a momentous age. He was one of the chief actors in a great revolution which materially altered the course of the world's history. Pliny lived in a comparatively "still" period, when one of the greatest of the Roman sovereigns was at the helm of public affairs; so in his picture

[1] There is a striking passage, based on Pliny's reflexions, in Professor Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, on this longing to be remembered after death, so common to the Roman (pagan) mind.

"The secret of immortality, the one chance of escaping oblivion, is to have your thought embalmed in choice and distinguished literary form, which coming ages will not willingly let die (Plin. *Ep.* ii. 10. 4, iii. 7. 14). . . . This longing to be remembered was the most ardent passion of the Roman mind in all ages and in all ranks . . . of that immense literary ambition which Pliny represented, and which he considered it his duty to foster, only a small part has reached its goal. . . . The great mass of these eager littérateurs have altogether vanished, or remain to us as mere shadowy names in Martial, or Statius, or Pliny." Book ii. chap. i.

we find none of the stress and storm which live along the pages of Cicero's correspondence.

It is an everyday life which Pliny depicts with such skill and vivid imagery, the life, after all, which "finds" the majority of men and women.

But it was the bright side of ancient society which Pliny loved to describe. Without his Letters we should have had no notion of the warm and tender friendships—of the simple pleasures—of the loving charities—of the lofty ideals of so many of the *élite* of Roman society in the second century.

It has been well said that Pliny felt that he lacked the power to write a great history, such as that which Tacitus, with whom he was closely associated, or even his younger friend Suetonius in an inferior degree, have given us. So he chose, fortunately for us, to strike out another line altogether, a perfectly new line, and in his ten Books[1] of Letters he gives us simply a domestic picture of everyday life in his time.

. . . . . .

They were no ordinary Letters; we can without any great effort of imagination picture to ourselves the famous Letter-writer touching and retouching his correspondence. Some modern critics in judging his style do not hesitate to place his Latinity on a level with that of Cicero. Renan, no mean judge of style, in words we have already quoted, speaks of "la langue précieuse et raffinée de Pline."

The subjects he loved to dwell on were sometimes literature, at others, the beauties of nature, the quiet charms of country life—"me nihil æque ac naturæ opera delectant," he wrote once. He eloquently describes the Clitumnus fountain, and the villa overlooking the Tiber valley; very elaborate and graceful are his descriptions of scenery; yet more attractive to us are his pictures of the "busy idleness" of the rich and noble of his day.

Curious and interesting are the allusions to and descrip-

[1] It seems most probable that the first nine Books of Pliny's Letters were put out in "book form" for public use at different periods—and subsequently collected in one volume. The "official" correspondence between Pliny and Trajan was apparently "published" somewhat later. But it is evident that in the days of Symmachus (end of fourth century) the whole had been placed together, and thus made up the ten Books we now possess.

tions of the reading of new works, poems, histories, correspondence, etc., before large gatherings of friends. Some of these "readings," which evidently formed an important feature in the society of the Empire, must often have been sadly wearisome. Our writer, for instance, describes Sentius Augurinus reciting his own poems during three whole days. Pliny expresses his delight at this lengthy recitation, but he confesses that these constant and lengthy recitations were deemed by some tiresome. His own Letters were read aloud to an appreciative audience, who would suggest corrections and changes.

Pliny was quite conscious when he wrote these famous Letters, that he was writing for no mere friend or relative, but for a wide public. He evidently hoped that they would live long after he had passed away; it is doubtful, though, if he had ever dreamed that they would be read with interest and delight for uncounted centuries. For instance, he naively expresses his delight that his writings were sold and read in Lyons, on the banks of the distant Rhone.

He has been accused by some, not otherwise unkindly critics, of writing for effect—of putting upon paper finer feeling than was absolutely natural to him; some of his descriptions of nature, for instance, savoured of affectation. There may be some truth in this criticism. But it only proves, what we have taken some pains to assert, that this intensely interesting correspondence was most carefully prepared—revised and redacted possibly several times—that he wrote to impress the public. Indeed, throughout the whole collection there are numerous marks of the most careful arrangement.

At the same time there are many natural touches in which his very faults are curiously manifest; so in reading these letters, in spite of occasional bursts of a possible artificial enthusiasm, we are sensible that his inner life, his real self, live along his charming pages; for instance, his curious conceit in his own literary power comes out in such passages as that in which he compares himself not unfavourably with his dear friend, that greatest master of history, Tacitus. There were other writers of great power and of brilliant genius,

but "You," so he writes to Tacitus, "so strong was the affinity of our natures, seemed to me at once the easiest to imitate, and the most worthy of imitation. Now we are named together; both of us have, I may say, some name in literature; for as I include myself, I must be moderate in my praise of you."

In the midst of these striking pictures of the day and of the society of the quiet and comparatively happy times of the Emperor Trajan—in the last and perhaps the least interesting Book of his correspondence—the one generally known as the tenth Book, which contains his semi-official Letters to the Emperor, and some of Trajan's replies,—stands out the great Christian episode in his government of Bithynia and Pontus, by far the most valuable notice that we possess of the numbers and of the influence of the Christian sect in the first years of the second century, only a few years after the death of S. John.

The reference in Tacitus to the cruel persecution of Nero, and the yet briefer notices in Suetonius, are, of course, of the highest value; but the detailed story of Pliny, where he tells the Emperor actually what was taking place in the province of which he was governor, and gives us his own impressions of the works and days of the Christians, is and ever will be to the ecclesiastical historian the most precious testimony of a great pagan to the position which the Christians held in the Roman Empire some eighty years after the Resurrection morning.

We have already, it will be remembered, dwelt at some length on what was evidently in Pliny's mind on the subject—on the impressions, after a careful and lengthy investigation, which this unpopular sect made upon him. He tells his imperial friend and master exactly what he thought; and it is clear that the great Emperor was strangely moved by Pliny's words, and framed his famous rescript upon the report in question on the gentler lines we have dwelt upon above.

The value of such a picture of very early Christian life, painted by an eminent pagan statesman and scholar in the midst of such a work, so carefully arranged, so thought out, prepared, as we have seen, for posterity, as the Letters of Pliny were, can never be too highly valued.

II

VOGUE OF EPISTOLARY FORM OF LITERATURE

HOW Pliny was admired and copied in the Roman world of literature we learn from the subsequent story of Roman literature preserved to us.

With the exception of the writings of Suetonius, Pliny's friend, for a lengthened period after the reign of Trajan, an age splendidly illustrated by the writings of Tacitus and Pliny, little literature has come down to us; very silent, indeed, after Trajan's age seems to have been the highly cultured and literary society of Rome of which Pliny writes in such vivid and appreciative terms.

Thoughtful men seem to consider that in the Roman Empire, under Hadrian, under the noble Antonine princes and their successors, "the soil, the race, the language were alike exhausted." Be that as it may, there is no doubt that from the time of Trajan until the latter days of the wondrous story of Rome, late in the fourth century, apart from a group of purely Christian writers, Latin literature was practically extinct; certainly it produced nothing worthy to be transmitted to later ages.

Perhaps a solitary but not a very notable exception might be made in the few fragments that have come down to us of Fronto, the tutor and dear friend of Marcus Aurelius. These fragments are chiefly pieces of his correspondence with his pupils Marcus and his shortlived colleague in the Empire, Lucius Verus. It is not, however, probable that these letters were ever intended for publication or for general reading. It has been said with some truth that the Emperor Marcus and his scholar friend and tutor wrote to each other with the effusiveness of two schoolgirls.[1] In one particular these

[1] Dr. Mackail, *Latin Literature*, iii. v.

correspondents evidently agreed—they both disliked, and tried to despise, the fast growing Christian community.

Towards the close of the fourth century, however, when the great Emperor Theodosius was fast fading away, worn out with cares and anxieties for the future of an empire which even his splendid abilities were powerless to preserve even for a little season, in a period which has been graphically compared to the "wan lingering light of a late autumnal sunset," arose a few, a very few distinguished writers, whose works posterity has judged worthy of preservation.[1]

With two of the best known of these, the pagan poet Claudian, whose splendid claims for posthumous fame are undoubted, and somewhat later the half-pagan, half-Christian poet Ausonius, we are not concerned in this study; they were purely poets. Two other authors, however, in this late evening of Roman story especially interest us, as they carry on the tradition on which we have been dwelling,—the love for and interest in "letters," in carefully studied "correspondence," which the Letters of Cicero and Pliny made the fashion in the literary society of imperial Rome.

Symmachus, in the last years of the fourth century, and Sidonius Apollinaris, some half century later in the fifth century, were close imitators of Pliny. Their Letters have come down to us; and the popularity which they enjoyed in their own time, a popularity which has endured more or less in all succeeding ages, tells us what a powerful and enduring influence the correspondence of Pliny must have exercised over the old world of Rome.

Both these writers belonged to the highest class in the society of the dying Empire. Q. Aurelius Symmachus had held some of the highest offices open to the patrician order, he had been governor of several important provinces, prefect of the city, and consul; in his later years he was regarded and generally treated as the chief of the Senate, for whose privileges he was intensely jealous at a time when the despotic

[1] The purely Christian writings, mainly theological, are not included in this brief summary—able and brilliant as some of these undoubtedly were; other causes, apart from their literary merits, have largely contributed to their preservation.

rule of the Emperor had reduced the once proud assembly to a group of shadowy names whose principal title to honour and respect was the splendid tradition of a great past.

This Symmachus, statesman and ardent politician, was a writer of no mean power. Like Pliny, whom in common with all the literary society of Rome he admired and longed to imitate, he determined to go down to posterity as a writer of Letters.

These Letters of his were read and re-read in his day and time ; his contemporaries classed him as on a level with Cicero, and loved to compare him with the younger Pliny, whom Symmachus adopted as his model. Many copies were made of his correspondence ; his letters were treasured up in precious caskets, and after he had passed away, his son, Memmius Symmachus, collected them all together, dividing them, as Pliny's had been divided, into ten Books. Nine of them, like the compositions of the great writer whom he strove to imitate, are mainly concerned with private and domestic matters ; the tenth, as in the case of Pliny, being made up of official communications which had passed between his father and the reigning Emperor.

It is somewhat dull reading this " Symmachus " correspondence, but it gives us a picture of the nobler and purer portion of Roman society in the closing years of the fourth century. He was too good a scholar, too able a man, not to see his inferiority to Pliny ; and evidently he had his doubts respecting the claim of his correspondence to immortality, and he apologizes for their barrenness of interesting incident ; but his contemporaries and his devoted son thought otherwise, and to their loyal admiration we owe the preservation of his carefully prepared and corrected, though somewhat tedious, imitation of the charming Letters of Pliny.

Sidonius Apollinaris, who flourished a little more than half a century later, belonged also to the great Roman world ; he was born at Lyons about A.D. 430, and partly owing to the elevation of his father-in-law Avitus to the imperial throne, was rapidly preferred to several of the great offices of the Empire—amongst these to the prefecture of Rome. His undoubted ability, his high character, and great position

and fortune led to his election by popular voice to the bishopric of Clermont (though not in Holy orders), the episcopal city of his native Auvergne in Gaul. In his new and to him strange position there is no doubt that he fulfilled the expectation of the people who chose him as bishop ; and when, some fifteen or twenty years after his election, in the great Auvergne diocese, he passed away, he was deeply, even passionately, mourned by his flock. He had been their devoted pastor, their helper and defender in the troublous and anxious period of the Visigothic occupation of Southern Gaul.

Sidonius Apollinaris was a poet of some power, and a graceful and fluent writer of panegyrics of great personages which in that age were much in vogue. He was also deeply read in the literature to which so many of the leaders of Roman society in the late evening of the Empire were ardently devoted.

But it is from his "*Correspondence*" that this eminent representative of the patrician order in the last days of the Empire will ever be remembered. We possess some hundred and forty-seven of his letters. They were collected and revised by him after he became Bishop of Clermont. Their publication is usually dated between the years 477 and 488. The letters were divided according to ancient models, Pliny being the principal model, into nine Books. (There was no tenth Book of official correspondence in his case.)

In their present form, revised and redacted by the writer himself, very many of the letters read as though intended for a public far wider than the individuals to whom the communications were originally addressed ; and it is more than probable that from a comparatively early period, Sidonius intended to follow a well-known practice, and wrote many of his letters with a view to their being preserved as pieces of literature. He even tells us he proposed to be an imitator of Symmachus, his predecessor in this special form of writing by some fifty or sixty years ; and Symmachus, we know, was an ardent admirer and imitator of Pliny.

The Letters, however, of Sidonius possess a far wider interest for us than the correspondence of Symmachus. Symmachus is dull and even prosy, partly from his exaggerated attention

to Pliny's rule which he suggested to one of his correspondents on the subject of letter-writing. The letter-writer, said Pliny, must aim at a style at once compressed and accurate in its form of expression (*pressus sermo purusque ex Epistolis petitur*). Sidonius, on the other hand, is diffuse and often picturesque, and his language is enriched or disfigured by an ample and often a barbarous vocabulary, drawn from the popular dialect into which the Latin of Cicero and Pliny was fast declining when the Bishop of Clermont wrote. His correspondents were many and various, including, it appears, some seventeen contemporary bishops.

On the whole, the Letters of Sidonius give a vivid and even a brilliant picture of the highly cultivated life of the noble and upper classes of the fast fading Empire of the fifth century.

. . . . . .

Briefly to sum up what we have said in this second study of Pliny's Letters. We have dwelt on the great importance of Pliny's picture of Christianity in the first years of the second century ; for it was

1st. A picture painted by a great Roman (pagan) statesman ; and

2nd. Though it appears in a letter, the letter was one of a collection of Letters intended for future generations. Pliny here copied Cicero, who really may be said to have " invented " this novel and peculiar form of literature, *i.e.*, letters written not merely for private friends and officials, but for the public, and intended to be handed down, if they were found worthy, to after ages.

The " silence " of all Latin literature after the age of Pliny for some two hundred and seventy years, of course prevents citing any examples of such letters, written for public use and for posterity, during this " silent " period.

But *after* this " silence," a brief renaissance of Latin literature took place.

In this renaissance the works of only two prose writers of great reputation have been preserved for us. Both these were most distinguished men in the political world and in the world of literature.

And these two chose to copy Pliny's plan of letter-writing, *i.e.*, letters composed for public use and intended for posterity.

The two were Symmachus and Sidonius Apollinaris.

After this brief renaissance of Letters a veil of darkness fell over the Roman world.

III

VOGUE OF EPISTOLARY FORM IN LITERATURE—THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

WHEN we consider how in the first century of the Christian era it was a frequent custom to clothe literature of all kinds in the letter form, and how popular amongst all classes and orders was this method —so to speak—of literary expression, when associated with it were, among a crowd of comparatively undistinguished authors, such personalities as Cicero, Seneca, and Pliny, whose letters as pieces of literature obtained at once an enormous popularity which has never really waned,[1] it becomes a grave and interesting question : Did this fashion, this method, this singularly popular form of writing, affect the great New Testament writers, and induce them to cast their sublime inspired thoughts in this special form, which certainly, when the apostles put out their writings, was a loved and admired literary method ?

The fact of so large a portion of the New Testament writings being cast in " letter form " is striking ; it is quite different from anything that we find in the Old Testament Scriptures, where, save in one solitary instance (Jer. xxix.), nothing in the letter form appears in that wonderful compilation which embraces so many subjects, and which in the composition spread over many centuries ; but we are so accustomed to the New Testament writings, that the fact of a very large portion of the collection of its inspired writings being in " letter " form does not at first appear strange or unusual.

We may preface the few suggestions which follow with the

[1] We might also cite here the well-known " poetic " epistles of Ovid and Horace.

remark, that whether or no the suggestion be entertained as a possible, even as a probable thought, the fact of "inspiration"—the fact of the New Testament writings referred to being "the word of God"—is not in the slightest degree affected. For it is the substance of the divine message, not the "colour" or "material" of the clothing of the message, which is of such paramount importance.

The question of the "colour" and "material" of the message's clothing, the consideration in what it is clothed, is deeply interesting; but, after all, is nothing more.

The "message" which we believe to be from God remains the same—be it enclosed in a "pamphlet," in a "treatise," in a "study" (*étude*), or in a "letter" form.

Nothing like an analysis of the New Testament Epistles, some of which will be briefly referred to in the course of this study, will be attempted. Such an analysis would not, of course, enter into the scheme of the present work.

We would first indicate some at least of the New Testament Letters which certainly seem to be more than letters in the ordinary sense of the word—which, indeed, are "settings" to short theological treatises containing statements of the highest doctrinal import.

These "Letters" were evidently intended for a far more extended circle of readers than the congregations immediately addressed.

We have already in a previous section quoted the three Epistles of S. Paul written during his first imprisonment,[1] A.D. 61–3 (viz. the Epistles to the Colossians, Philippians, and Ephesians), as embodying some of the more weighty and important doctrinal teachings of the great apostle put out during the period in which S. Paul preached to the Christians of the capital, and thus and then earned his well-known and acknowledged claim to be one of the two "founders" of the Church of Rome—S. Peter being the other.

One of the reasons, no doubt, of the vast and long-enduring

[1] The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and to the Galatians are not quoted, but they are conspicuous examples of great doctrinal teaching embodied in the letter form. In a lesser degree the same remark is applicable to the two Letters to the Thessalonians and the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

popularity of the "letter" form of literature was the introduction of quasi-confidential remarks, which gave a freshness, a breath of everyday life to the composition; or, to use another image, the "Letter" might even be termed a picturesque and attractive "setting" to the graver, the more serious thoughts contained in the writing.

This is well exemplified in the famous collection of the correspondence of Cicero, of whose Letters it has been happily written that the majority are "brief confidential outpourings of the moment." The same purely human colouring is manifest in the Letters of Seneca, written from the year 57 and onwards; this is even more especially noticeable in the Letters of the younger Pliny.

There are, however, certain of the Pauline Epistles which partake more closely of the nature of *private* letters, and which scarcely seem intended for public circulation—notably the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the little letter to Philemon.

Professor Deissmann, of Heidelberg, who has written at some length on the subject, differs somewhat from the general view taken here of S. Paul's writings; but while expressing his doubts as to whether any of the Pauline Epistles were really written by the apostle with a view to publication, he unhesitatingly decides that amongst the New Testament writings the Epistle to the Hebrews, the First Epistle of John, the First Epistle of Peter, the Epistles of James and Jude, were most certainly written in "letter" form for general circulation.

As early certainly as the third century, the Christian Church placed the so-called Catholic Epistles as a group apart among the canonical writings and termed them "Catholic" or universal, as addressed to no one special congregation. This is absolutely true in the cases of the Epistles of 1 Peter, James, Jude, and 1 John, above referred to.

The First Epistle of *Peter* is addressed to a vast number of the "Dispersion," who, the apostle says, were sojourning in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia, —these provinces almost covering the region now popularly known as Asia Minor.

James wrote to the twelve tribes scattered abroad.

John in his First Epistle gives no address at all, leaving his Letter perfectly general—or universal.

Jude, too, names no particular congregation, but simply writes to those that are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and called."

In the Epistle "to the Hebrews" the writer is unnamed, and there is no mention of those to whom the anonymous "Letter" is addressed. It is, however, clear from the tenor of the "Letter" that it was addressed to Jewish Christians, and probably to Jewish Christians settled in Rome.

The "Pastoral" Epistles, so called (including 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), were evidently intended for general circulation.

We may therefore conclude that the greater number of the New Testament Letters—certainly the four principal "Catholic" Epistles and the great Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Epistles of S. Paul with the exceptions above noted, influenced by the analogy of other collections of Letters made in the same age, were written in "letter" form, but were intended for a large group of readers. This particular "letter" form being adopted owing to the great popularity, throughout the Roman Empire, of this special description of literature.

Thus it is evident that the great Christian teachers to a certain extent adopted the most loved popular literary forms of the age in which they lived, especially choosing the letter form which such distinguished writers as Cicero, Seneca, and a little later the younger Pliny adopted.

While the "*Acts* of the Apostles" more or less followed the literary method of profane historical literature, with its picturesque insertion of "speeches," "letters," and "official papers"; while the "Revelation of S. John" more or less followed the method adopted in Jewish apocalyptic literature of the famous Alexandrian school: alone the *Gospels* are absolutely an original form—a literary form which originated *within* Christianity itself—a literary form which stands out alone. It imitated nothing, it followed no classical or Jewish examples—no models, however beautiful, attractive, or popular; nor has it ever been imitated in all the Christian ages, stretching over more than eighteen centuries, simply because it is inimitable.

And when the Catholic Church judged, and as we see now wisely judged, that the Voice of Inspiration was hushed, we find that the literary remains of the primitive age of Christianity which have been preserved to us are cast in the same "letter" form, those few literary remains which have received the lofty title of "Apostolic." The word comes to us from Ignatius, and seems to bear the meaning that the writers of these "remains" were historically connected with the apostles.

These writings properly so styled come from four persons—from (1) *Clement* (of Rome), of whom the tradition, constant and definite, tells us he was the disciple of Peter and also of Paul.

(2) From *Ignatius*, whose early date and connexion with Antioch, a chief centre of apostolic work, render, as Lightfoot well urges, his personal intercourse with apostles at least probable. The earliest tradition represents Ignatius as the second of the Antiochene bishops. His martyrdom must be dated *circa* A.D. 110. He was evidently then an old man. He was certainly a younger contemporary of some of the apostles.

(3) From *Polycarp*, whose close connexion in youth with S. John is indisputable, since his own disciple, the well-known Irenæus, tells us that Polycarp was a scholar of the beloved disciple; and that he (Irenæus) had heard from his master, Polycarp, many anecdotes of the apostles, which he had treasured up in his memory.

(4) From *Barnabas*, whose immediate connexion with the apostle is less certain; but the early date of his Epistle, written apparently during the days of the Flavian dynasty, would render the ancient traditions of this connexion at least highly probable.

These writings, few and humble, which have come down to us, are all we can with any certainty ascribe to "Apostolic" men; and they *are all cast in "letter-form,"* viz., the one somewhat lengthy Epistle of Clement, the seven authentic Epistles of Ignatius, the one brief Epistle of Polycarp, the

one (of considerable length) Epistle of Barnabas. These Epistles are genuine "Letters," and "represent the natural outpouring of personal feeling arising out of personal relations"; but they contain doctrinal statements of the deepest importance, notably emphatic or positive statements bearing on the Godhead of Jesus Christ.[1]

These Epistles[2] were obviously meant by the writers for a far more extended circle of readers than the congregations of Corinth, Philippi, Rome, etc., to whom the Letters were formally addressed.

[1] The words which occur in "the address" of the Letters of Ignatius to the Christian congregation in the city of Tralles are remarkable. "The holy Church which is in Tralles of Asia I salute . . . after the manner of the apostle (ἐν ἀποστολικῷ χαρακτῆρι)." This Bishop Lightfoot explains as a reference of Ignatius to the *Epistolary* form of his communication, that being a *usual form* adopted by the apostles.

[2] Hermas, whose writings are usually classed with the works of the "Apostolic Fathers," does not fall into this category.

(*a*) There is some doubt as to whether Hermas can be rightly considered an "Apostolic Father."

(*b*) His writings are not cast in the Epistolary form, but are purely theological treatises or pamphlets.

They are partially examined below (see pp. 178-84) with reference to their date, authorship, and contents generally.

PART IV

HADRIAN, A.D. 117–A.D. 138

SOME four years after his correspondence with Pliny on the subject of the Christians in Bithynia, the Emperor Trajan died somewhat suddenly in the course of his Eastern campaign, at the Cilician, town of Selinus (A.D. 117).

Trajan was succeeded by his kinsman Hadrian, who had married the Emperor's great-niece Julia Sabina. The circumstances of Hadrian's succession are somewhat confused. It was given out generally that he had been adopted by Trajan as his successor. It is certain, however, that his pretensions to the imperial power were favoured by Trajan's Empress, Plotina, and some even ascribe his succession largely to a palace intrigue; it is clear that no real opposition to his peaceable assumption of the imperial power was offered.

It is regrettable that we possess no notable contemporary history of one of the most remarkable of the Roman Emperors. How intensely interesting would have been a picture by Tacitus of so extraordinary and unique a personality!

What we know of Hadrian and his reign of twenty-one years we gather principally from the pages of Spartianus, one of the six writers of the Augustan history who lived in the days of Diocletian, more than a century and a half later, and from some brief notices of Dion Cassius, of the Emperor Julian, and of three or four other writers who have given us short sketches of his life, and also from a somewhat longer account of the eleventh century monk Xiphilinus, and from notices on medals and inscriptions.

The Emperor Hadrian was no ordinary man. Rarely

gifted with various and varied talents, he delighted to appear before the Roman world as a soldier and a statesman, as an artist and a poet; and in each of them, certainly in the first two characters, he occupied a fairly distinguished position. To the world he has gone down as a great traveller. He was not content with sitting at the helm of his Empire in Rome, or in one of his magnificent villas in Italy; he would see each of his many provinces and their chief cities with his own eyes, and then judge what was best for them,—how he could best improve their condition and develop their resources.

During his reign there were few, indeed, of the chief cities of the Roman world which he had not visited,—few which did not receive in some fashion or other the stamp of his presence among them. He was accompanied usually with a vast trained staff, as we should term it, of experts in arts and crafts, of painters, sculptors, architects, and skilled builders.

He had, of course, immense resources at his command, for he was a great financier, and was able with little effort to draw vast sums for the magnificent works he carried on in all parts of the Empire. The world had never seen, will probably never see again, a great building sovereign like Hadrian; and though he restored, decorated, rebuilt baths, amphitheatres, stately municipal buildings, and in many instances whole cities, often named after himself,[1] he never seems to have neglected Rome; for the traces of his expensive works there are still to be seen, while he watched over and lavishly kept up the costly amusements so dear to the luxurious and pleasure-loving capital. In one day, for instance, we read of a hundred lions being slain in the arena of the great Roman theatre, while his doles to the people were ever on a lavish scale. Rome was never allowed to suffer for the absence or for the immense foreign expenditure of the imperial traveller.

But Hadrian was not a good man, though he was a magnificent sovereign. His life was made up of the strangest

[1] Seventeen of these cities so named are commemorated on extant coins and medals; and this number is largely increased by some writers. These cities of Hadrian bearing his name were situated in various districts of the Roman world, notably in Asia Minor, North Africa, Spain, Syria, Pannonia.

contradictions. At times he played the part almost of an ascetic, abstaining from wine in his repasts, and even submitting to the work and fatigues of an ordinary legionary soldier. At times his life was disfigured by the grossest excesses and debauchery.[1] His attitude towards Christianity especially concerns us. He had no religion, no faith. He was interested in all cults to a certain extent, was even initiated into the mysteries of some of the old pagan beliefs; and while he accepted nothing, he denied nothing.

His famous rescript to Serenus Granianus, now generally accepted as genuine, gives us some conception of his estimate of Christianity, at least in the earlier portion of his reign. It virtually endorses what Trajan had written to Pliny in the matter of the Bithynian Christians. They were not to be hunted out, but if legally convicted as Christians they were to suffer. Hadrian, certainly in his earlier years, even went further in the direction of toleration than his predecessor. An informer, unless he could prove the truth of his accusation, would be subject to the severest penalties of the law.

But Hadrian, like Trajan who reigned before him, and Antoninus Pius who succeeded him on the imperial throne, knew very little of Christianity. It is more than doubtful if he had ever seen a Gospel; and although his sense of justice and his perfect indifference to all religions dictated the terms and inspired the tone of the famous rescript in question, in common with all Roman statesmen he evidently disliked and even feared the strange faith which was gradually gaining ground so rapidly in the world of Rome.

This dislike of Christianity, which some historians characterize in Hadrian's case as positively hatred of the faith, was shown markedly in the latter years of his life by the deliberate insults which he offered to the most sacred Christian memories in Jerusalem after the close of the terrible Jewish war in A.D. 135. Some modern writers have pleaded that no special profanation was intended by Hadrian when the building of Ælia Capitolina on the site of Jerusalem was proceeded with

[1] De Champagny, *Les Antonins*, iii. 1, tersely and well sums up his character: "Il a tous les dons, et toutes les faiblesses, toutes les grandeurs, et toutes les puérilitées, toutes les ambitions."

after the Jewish war; but the testimony of Christian writers[1] here is very positive. An image of Jupiter was placed on the Mount of the Ascension; a statue of Venus was adored on the hill of Golgotha; Bethlehem was dedicated to Adonis, and a sacred grove was planted there; and the impure Phœnician rites were actually celebrated in the grotto of the Nativity.

But for the historian of the first days of Christianity, by far the most important event in this brilliant reign of Hadrian was the fatal Jewish war of A.D. 133–5 and its striking results. This was the war of extermination, as the Talmud subsequently termed it; the war in which the false Messiah Bar-cochab and the famous Rabbi Akiba were the most prominent figures. The outcome of this terrible war was the absolute destruction of the nationality of the Jewish people. From henceforth, *i.e.* after A.D. 134–5, the whole spirit of the Jews was changed; they lived from this time with new ideals, with new and different hopes and aims. This wonderful change we have described at some length and with many details in Book V. of this work.

From this time forward, there is no doubt that the conception which Roman statesmen had formed of Christianity underwent a marked change. Hitherto, more or less, the Christian was regarded as a Jewish dissenter, and was viewed at Rome with dislike, but at the same time with a certain contemptuous toleration provided that he kept out of sight. Trajan evidently, from the Pliny correspondence, was averse to harsh persecution if it could be avoided; and Hadrian, certainly in his earlier years, followed the policy of Trajan. But after A.D. 135 all this was changed. The Jewish people after the termination of the last bitter war passed into stillness.

They now rigidly abstained from admitting any stranger Gentiles into the charmed circle of Judaism, sternly forbidding any proselytizing. They abandoned all earthly ambition—their hope and expectation of seeing their land independent and powerful was relegated to a dim and distant future. They believed that they were the chosen people in far back days

[1] Cf. Jerome, *Ep.* 58, *Ad Paulin*, 3; Euseb. *De vitâ Constant.* iii. 26; Sozomen, i. 1; St. Paulin, *Ep.* 31 (ii.) *ad Severum*; Rufin. *H. E.* i. 8; Sulp. Severus, ii. 25, 45; Ambrose, *Psalm* 43; and in modern historians, cf. De Vogüé's *Églises de la terre sainte*, iii.; De Champagny, *Les Antonins*, livre iii. c. iii.

of the Eternal of Hosts—they would quietly wait His good pleasure, and by a rigid observance in all its minutest details of the divine law, which they made the sole object of their study and meditation, would merit once more His favour; they hoped and expected at some distant day again to rejoice in the light of His countenance,—a light, alas! long since veiled owing to their past disobedience; to the Christian and his teaching in the meantime they vowed an implacable hatred.

It then began (after A.D. 134–5), slowly at first, to dawn upon the statesmen of Rome that the Christian was no mere Jewish dissenter, but a member of a new and perfectly distinct community, a sect intensely in earnest, successful in making proselytes, possessing, too, a secret power which the Roman statesman marvelled at but was incapable of understanding,—a secret power which made the Christian absolutely fearless of death and utterly regardless of any punishment human ingenuity could devise; a sect, too, which, quite independent of the Jews, daily was multiplying, and was rapidly numbering in its ranks men and women of every calling, drawn, too, from every province indifferently in the wide Roman empire,—becoming, indeed, an Empire within an Empire.

But the subjects of this inner Empire, while loyal to the State, obedient, and peaceful, dwelt as it were as a nation apart, professing an allegiance to an invisible Power unknown to the ancient traditions of Rome, and irreconcilably hostile to the ancient religion on which the true Roman loved to believe the grandeur of the Empire was based.

The consciousness of all this may be said to have really dawned upon Roman statesmen only after the great change which passed over Judaism at the close of the awful war of Hadrian,—a change which showed for the first time the broad gulf which yawned between the Jewish people and the new Christian community.

The last two years of Hadrian's reign, which immediately followed the close of the great Jewish war, were marked by the adoption of a new and severer policy by the State in regard to Christians. We hear of cases of extreme harshness in the case of the treatment of Christians by the State. Many stories of martyrdom date from this period. This stern policy was

pursued through the reign of the blameless Antoninus Pius, and became yet more pronounced and severe in the years of his successor, the yet nobler and purely patriotic Marcus, under whose rule, beneficent and just though it generally was, the Christians suffered as they had never suffered before.

For the first time after the close of the great Jewish war, A.D. 133–A.D. 135, the imperial government recognised what a grave danger to the Roman polity, to its ancient religion and its beliefs, was Christianity.

. . . . . .

For more than sixty years—that is, from the day that Nero charged the then comparatively little band of Roman Christians with being the authors of the great fire which reduced so large a portion of Rome to ashes—had the sword of persecution hung over the Christian communities. From that day, the follower of Jesus was an outlaw in the great Empire. His home, his life, were exposed to a perpetual danger; ever and anon a period of bitter persecution set in, and lives were sacrificed and homes were wrecked to gratify some wild and senseless popular clamour, or even as the result of some private and often malicious information. There was no security any more for a member of the proscribed sect.

It is true that a great and wise Emperor like Trajan reluctantly allowed the law as it stood to be carried out, but he made no effort to change it or to mitigate its stern penalties. Hadrian, certainly in his early and middle life, was like his predecessor generally averse to harrying the quiet sect, and his well-known rescript even threatened the severest penalties to the false informer who denounced a Christian; but in spite of these just efforts the Christian lived in a state of perpetual unrest,—a martyr's death was ever before the eyes of one who elected to be a follower of Jesus. This position of the Christians in the Roman Empire continued from A.D. 64–5 until the later days of Hadrian, A.D. 135–8.

But after the close of the great Jewish war, A.D. 135, as we have said, things grew even graver for the Christians. They now stood out conspicuous as an irreconcilable sect, quite different from the Jews, who after the great war had quietly submitted to Roman law and order.

II

HADRIAN'S POLICY TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY IN HIS CLOSING YEARS

IN the last years of Hadrian and during the reigns of Pius and Marcus must be dated not a few of the accounts of early martyrs. The "Acts" which contain these recitals, it is true, are for the most part of doubtful authority.[1] They contain details which are clearly not historical, and critical investigation generally pronounces them untrustworthy. But the studies of later years, especially in the lore of the catacombs, show us that even for the more improbable and precarious records, evidently edited and enlarged at a date considerably later than the events which they purport to chronicle, there is evidently a basis of truth; and it is clear that the men and women whose sufferings and brave deaths for the faith are told in the "Acts," for the most part were historical persons.

But we possess a much more dependable foundation for our statement that the last years of Hadrian and the prolonged reigns of Hadrian's two successors, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Antoninus, were periods of bitter persecution for the Christian sect in Rome and in the provinces; that the years which elapsed between A.D. 135 and A.D. 180 were years of a persecution graver and more sustained than anything endured previously by the followers of Jesus.

There has come down to us a group of contemporary Christian writings,[2] the authenticity of which no critic friendly

[1] A certain number of them, however, are by all responsible critics received as absolutely genuine, such as: The Letters relating the Martyrdom of Polycarp; the recital of the sufferings and death of the martyrs of Lyons; the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs; and a few years later the passion of S. Perpetua and of her companions in suffering.

[2] Extracts from them are given on pp. 177–191.

or hostile ventures to impugn. It is from these writings that we obtain our knowledge of what was the condition of the Christians in the Empire.

There is no question but that doubtful "Acts of Martyrdom," many of which purport to belong to this period, *i.e.*, from the last years of Hadrian to the death of Marcus Antoninus, have given colour to the theory which has found favour with certain writers, some even of the first rank, that, after all, the number of martyrs was but small. Recent study has, however, completely set aside this theory. In the first place, the scientific investigation of the Roman catacombs has shown that in many cases the heroes and heroines of the doubtful "Acts" were real *historical* persons; and, secondly, a careful study of the fragments of contemporary writers above referred to, has given us an exact and accurate picture of the period in question,[1] and the largest estimate of the number of sufferers during this period which has been made is probably too small.

Most melancholy was the close of the brilliant life of the great Emperor. Shortly after the close of the Jewish war, Hadrian returned to Italy and settled in the magnificent and fantastic palace he amused himself by building in the neighbourhood of Rome at Tibur. The vast group of buildings and parks and gardens of the so-called Villa of Hadrian was a copy of the more famous temples, baths, and villas he had visited during his long travels. Egypt, Greece, Italy, supplied him with models. But the seeds of a fatal malady were already sapping his strength. He was a sufferer from dropsy in its worst form; his life, too, had long been enfeebled by his wild excesses, to which ever and again he had given way. Then the strange mental sickness, the fatal heritage of so many absolute sovereigns, came over him. Nothing pleased him; no ray of hope lightened his ailing, suffering life; the present and the future were both dark.

[1] No scholar is more definite here than Renan, who certainly cannot be regarded as one who would be likely to dwell with emphasis on testimony which makes for the ardent faith of the Christians of the first days. And yet this great scholar brushes aside all the theories which maintain that the Christian martyrs of this period were few and insignificant in number; no modern writer is more positive on the awful character of the persecutions between A.D. 135 and A.D. 180.

His government became cruel, arbitrary, tyrannical. Many executions, not a few of them striking the highest in rank and authority, disfigured the closing years of the Emperor. The Christian sect, which lately, as we have explained already, had become in a specific manner feared and dreaded by the State, largely suffered during these sad closing years of his reign, and the dread persecution to which it was subjected during the reigns of his successors began in good earnest.

One dominant thought seems to have haunted Hadrian—the longing for death. Those who were nearest to his person, under the influence of the wise prince his adopted successor, generally known as Antoninus Pius, restrained him on several occasions from laying violent hands on himself; but it was no avail, and Hadrian died at Baiæ, A.D. 138, the death no doubt hastened, if not absolutely caused, by his own act.

The following little table will explain the succession of the Antonines to the Empire:

Hadrian first adopted Ælius Verus—a patrician, but a voluptuous and carelessly living man; he died, however, in the lifetime of Hadrian, leaving a son Verus, afterwards associated in the Empire with Marcus, whom, however, he predeceased by many years.

Hadrian subsequently adopted as his successor Aurelius Antoninus, known in history as Antoninus Pius.

Antoninus Pius belonging to a Gallic family of Nîmes, had filled the highest offices in the State, and later became a trusted counsellor of the Emperor Hadrian, and his devoted friend. He was a patrician of the highest character. When Hadrian adopted him he required him to secure the imperial succession by adopting Verus the son of Ælius Verus, whom he had originally adopted but who had died, and also Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, his young kinsman, a nephew of his (Hadrian's) wife.

Antoninus Pius became Emperor in A.D. 138. *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* succeeded him in A.D. 161.

III

ANTONINUS PIUS, A.D. 138–A.D. 161
MARCUS ANTONINUS, A.D. 161–A.D. 180

AFTER the death of Hadrian, in A.D. 138, for forty-two years the Empire of Rome was ruled by two sovereigns who, pagan though they were, live in the pages of historians of all lands as the most perfect of any known sovereign rulers. They are known as the two Antonines: the first is distinguished by the title given him by his contemporaries, "Pius"; the second, by the best known of his several names, "Marcus Aurelius."

They were not conquerors, not even great legislators; although under their beneficent, and with one sad exception generally wise rule, the laws of the State, in the case especially of the downtrodden and helpless, were materially improved and supplemented.

Our contemporary pagan literature here, alas! is but scanty; what has come down to us is even more unsatisfactory than what we possess in the contemporary records of Hadrian.

No great writer in prose or poetry arose in these forty-two years; and when in the fifth and following centuries, the era of confusion and universal decay, manuscripts began to be only sparingly copied, the records of this period were neglected, and what attention to literature was given, the copyists of the MSS. devoted to the masterpieces of the Augustan and even of an earlier age, such as the famous prose works of Cicero and Tacitus, of Pliny and of Suetonius; of poets such as Lucretius, Vergil and Ovid, Propertius, Juvenal and Horace.

We possess only abbreviations of the Chronicles of the Antonines, somewhat dry and uninteresting, wanting in details and in picturesque illustration. It is true that no great war—no striking conquest—no terrible intestine dis-

turbances—disfigured these happier reigns, or supplied material which would arrest the attention of the writer and reader. It is mainly from side sources that we learn enough of the character and government of the Antonines to justify the unfeigned admiration which in all times has been given to these two good and great princes.

The title "Pius," which was bestowed on the elder Antoninus by the Senate at the beginning of his reign, and by which he is universally known, was well deserved. His unfeigned devotion to the ancient Roman religion, his reputation for justice and wisdom, for clemency and sobriety, his stern morality, the high example he ever set in his private and public life—were admirably expressed in this title. His great predecessors—Emperors such as Vespasian and Titus, Trajan and Hadrian, possessed each of them some of these distinguishing characteristics, but only some; the lives of these famous Emperors being all more or less disfigured by regrettable flaws.

But the title "Pius" in the first instance seems to have been given to the first Antonine owing to the universal admiration of his generous and devoted behaviour to his adopted father and predecessor Hadrian, whom he tenderly watched over during his last sad years of ever increasing sickness and terrible life-weariness, and whose memory he protected with a rare and singular chivalry, if we may venture to use a beautiful and significant word which belongs to a later period in the world's history.

The sources, whence we derive our too scanty knowledge of this almost flawless life, besides the notices and details preserved in the abbreviations of the contemporary chronicles we have spoken of, comprise the comparatively recently recovered letters of Fronto, a famous philosopher and man of letters to whom Antoninus Pius entrusted the principal share in the training of his adopted son and successor known in history as the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and more especially the noble and touching estimate of his works and days contained in the singular and exquisite little book written by his adopted son Marcus, generally known as his "Meditations."

We find the following striking words relating to Pius written by Marcus in this little book after the great Emperor, who had trained him so well for his high destiny, had passed away. It was in the form of a soliloquy with himself—with his own soul:

"Life is short; the only fruit of the earth-life is to do good to the men among whom our lot is cast. Ever act as a true pupil of Antoninus (Pius). Call to mind his invariable fixity of purpose in carrying out what was reasonable; remember how calm was his conduct under all circumstances; think of his piety; remember that serene expression of his; his invariable sweetness—his contempt for vainglory; his constant care in sifting the truth; his indifference to unjust reproaches . . . never suspicious; utterly careless of his own personal comfort; paying little heed to his food or his clothes; indefatigable in work; ever patient and self-denying. . . . Think (O my soul) of all this, so that when your own hour for departure strikes, it may find you, as it found him, conscious that the life-work had been well done."

Antoninus Pius had inherited a great fortune; and at the time of his adoption by Hadrian he was well on in middle life, and had filled with dignity and honour many of the high offices of State. When he succeeded to supreme power as the absolute and irresponsible sovereign of the greatest Empire ever under the sceptre of one man; after carefully discharging the many duties of his great position in his magnificent palace overlooking the Roman Forum, its splendid temples and its yet more splendid memories, he loved to retire for a brief season to his ancestral home and farm of Lorium in Etruria.

Antoninus Pius delighted in exchanging the imperial state and wearisome pomp of his Roman court, the artificial pleasures of the theatre and the circus, which gave him no real satisfaction, for the true and healthy joys of the woods and the fields. He enjoyed the harvest and the vintage festivals of the people. He loved the excitement of the chase; he was at once a devoted fisherman and a hunter, though for these things he never neglected the graver duties and the awful responsibilities of his great position. The Fronto

etters give us a beautiful picture of his family life at his orium farm.

But the great and good Emperor had a deeper and more far-reaching object at heart than simple self-gratification when he cast off the trammels of State and forsook the gay and brilliant court of the great capital for the plain unostentatious life of a country gentleman of the old Roman school.

The first Antonine was conscious that the soft, luxurious city life of which Rome was the great example, and which was too faithfully copied in the wealthy provincial centres, was enfeebling the Empire,—the builders and makers of Rome he well knew were the hardy race of men who feared the old gods and who were ready to fight and die for their country, and these men were the peasant-farmers produced by the old rural life of Italy. He would set the fashion himself, and if possible popularize this better and nobler way of living. He would bring back the memories of those great ones who had been the makers of that mighty empire.

It was no mere love of antiquity, no special taste for antiquarian lore, which induced Antoninus Pius to grave upon his coins the immemorial symbols telling of the ancient traditions belonging to the great past of Rome,—symbols many of which have been immortalized in the "haunting and liquid" rhythms of the poet loved in Rome,—Æneas carrying his father; the white sow sacrificed to Juno by the fugitive Æneas on the banks of Tiber; Mars and Rhea Sylvia; the sacred wild fig-tree beneath whose branches the wolf found the children Romulus and Remus; the wolf suckling the baby founders of the Queen City; the augur Nævius and his razor before King Tarquinius Priscus; Horatius who defended the bridge against the hosts of Porsenna. It was not the instinct of a curious and scholarly archæologist, but a deep and far-reaching purpose, which prompted Antoninus Pius to search out and rebuild the little unknown Arcadian village of Pallanteum, the ancient home of Evander, the host of Æneas,—Evander, the founder of the earliest Rome, whose beautiful story is told in the noble epic of Vergil.[1] The Emperor would popularize, would bring before his people the

[1] *Æneid*, Book viii.

glorious memories of the storied past—the wonderful story of Rome—its cherished traditions which told of the old love of the Immortals for Rome.

Antoninus Pius was by no means the first who felt that the greatness of Rome had been built up by that hardy race of men who had lived the simple homely life of rural toil, by men who feared the gods and believed in the rewards and punishments of the Immortals. The great statesman Emperor Augustus more than a century earlier had recognised this, and his poet Vergil had pressed home this truth in his deathless verses.

In the Eclogues, and still more in the Georgics, men were led to reverence the old simple manners and customs; and in the charmed verses of the Æneid the same teaching was enforced with yet greater eloquence and earnestness. "Work and pray" was the conclusion of the Georgics (*in primis venerare deos*), was the burthen of the poet's solemn charge.

And it was not only Augustus and his loved poet Vergil who had felt the power of the ancient Roman religion, so sadly ignored if not despised in their day and time, and who had seen that a return to the old Roman way of living and to the primitive simple beliefs and the old austere life alone would help to purify the corrupt and dissolute manners which were weakening, perhaps destroying, the old Roman spirit. Tacitus, the greatest historian Rome had ever given birth to, had also expressed the same beautiful thought. Juvenal the poet-satirist, too, who had lashed with an unsparing pen the luxury, the vices, and the follies of his age, painted as his ideal Roman a Curius, thrice consul, who, despising all state and pomp and luxury, hungry and tired after a day in the fields, preferred "a meal of herbs and bacon served on homely earthenware."

Juvenal had a true Roman reverence for the old heroes of the Republic, for the Curii, the Fabii, and the Scipios, and their unostentatious way of living. Even Martial felt a strange charm in the antique simplicity of the old republican statesmen and soldiers.

The younger Pliny, courtier, statesman, and polished writer, weary and sated with the brilliant luxurious life of a

great noble in the earlier years of the second century, in his wonderful picture of social life in the times of Trajan, shows us how intensely sensible he and his circle were of the purer pleasures and rest to be found in "the stillness of the pine woods, and the cold breeze from the Apennines which blew over his quiet rural home in Tuscany."

But while Augustus and his famous poets had striven to lead the citizens of the great empire to love and lead the more austere and purer life of the primitive Roman people, it was an open secret that the imperial teacher himself failed to lead the life he professed to love, for Augustus stained his own works and days with grave moral irregularities. The two Antonines, on the other hand, different from Augustus, set themselves as the noblest examples of a pure austere life; no moral stain or flaw was ever suffered to disfigure the life-work of these two patriotic pagan sovereigns.

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There was one master-thought deep buried in the heart of Antoninus Pius and of his adopted son and successor Marcus Antoninus. Their whole career was influenced by an intense love of Rome. They would preserve the mighty Empire from the decay which they perceived was fast gaining ground; they would set, by their own example, the vogue of the purer, simpler *religious* life on which the foundation stories of the Empire had been so securely laid; hence the bitter persecution of the Christian sect which was so striking and painful a feature in the Antonine administration of the Empire,—a persecution evidently active and bitter in the reign of Pius, but which greatly increased in intensity and virulence under the rule of his successor Marcus.

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The Antonines were intensely persuaded that all that was great and glorious in the Roman Empire came from the simple and even austere life led by their fathers under the protection of the mighty Immortals—of Jupiter of the Capitol, of Mars the Avenger, of Vesta with her sacred fire, of the great Twin Brethren—of the gods whose temples with their golden roofs were the stately ornaments of the Forum on which the Emperors looked down from their proud home on the Palatine Hill.

These were the deities which the great pagan Emperor believed "had cradled the Roman State and still watched over her career." It was this belief which induced Pius to grave on his coins the sacred memories of the earliest days of this divine protection on which we have been dwelling.

IV

REASONS OF THE PERSECUTING POLICY OF THE ANTONINES

AMONG the subjects of the Empire only one group stood persistently aloof from the crowds of worshippers who again thronged these time-honoured shrines ; this group refused to share in the ancient Roman cult which the Antonines had once more made the vogue in Rome and in her provinces, a cult to which these great pagan Emperors ever referred the glories of the past, and on which they grounded their hopes of a yet more splendid future for Rome.

The solitary group was indeed a strange one. To a Roman like Antoninus Pius it appeared to be composed of a sect, comparatively speaking, of yesterday ; for when his predecessor Augustus reigned and Vergil wrote, it had no existence. It was a sect professing, as it seemed to the Emperor, a new religion—a religion which claimed for the One it worshipped a solitary supremacy—a religion which regarded the awful gods of Rome as shadows, as mere phantoms of the imagination. Well might sovereigns like the Antonines shudder at a teaching which would appear to a true patriot Roman, whose heart was all aflame with national pride, to involve the most daring impiety, the most shocking blasphemy ; which would threaten a tremendous risk for the future of her people, if this fatal teaching should spread.

And this strange sect of yesterday, the Emperors would hear from their officials, was multiplying to an enormous extent, not only in Rome but in all the provinces.

They would receive reports from all lands how the new community called Christian was daily adding fresh converts to its extraordinary and dangerous belief,—converts drawn from the ranks of the humblest traders, from slaves and freedmen —converts drawn, too, from the noblest families of the Empire.

They would hear, too, from their responsible officials that the new sect, from its great and ever-increasing numbers, its striking unity of belief, its perfect organization, had already become a power in the State,—a real power with which the imperial government sooner or later would have assuredly to reckon, for it was a power which every day grew more formidable.

And for the first time, too, the pagan Emperors learnt from their officials that this new sect was not made up of Jews, as had been hitherto generally assumed, but that its members were something quite different—far, far more formidable and dangerous. It was true that there was no suggestion of any open revolt on the part of this strange group of subjects, such as Vespasian and Hadrian had to meet and to crush at Jerusalem and in Palestine in the case of the Jews; the danger to be feared from the Christians was that they were gradually winning the people's hearts; that they were turning the people's thoughts from the old gods of Rome to another and far greater Being, whom they averred was the loving Lord of all men, the supreme arbiter of life and death.

And to Emperors like the Antonines, whose devout minds ever loved to dwell on the constant protection of the Immortals, who they were persuaded had loved Rome from time immemorial, in whom they strove with sad earnestness to believe, to whom they prayed and taught their people to pray,—to Emperors like Pius and Marcus these Christians, with their intense faith, a faith for which they were only too ready to die, were indeed abhorrent; in their eyes they constituted an ever-present, an ever-increasing danger to Rome, her glorious traditions, her ancient religion, her very existence.

This was the secret of the new policy pursued by the State in its treatment of the Christians. It began to be adopted in the last years of Hadrian after the close of the great Jewish war in A.D. 134–5, when the Christian sect was discovered to be utterly separate from the Jews—distinct and even hostile to the Jewish race, with other and far more dangerous views and hopes; and when Antoninus Pius set himself to reform his people by reminding them of the manners and customs of their ancestors, by impressing upon them the duty of a

more earnest worship of the old gods of Rome, he found in the Christians his most dangerous opponents; hence the stern treatment which the new sect received at his hands; hence the policy of persecution which gathered strength during his reign, and was intensified in the days of his adopted son and successor Marcus.

On the whole, the usual verdict of tradition respecting the condition of Christians under the Antonines must be reversed. The reign of Antoninus Pius is commonly represented as a period of peace for the Church, and little is said about the treatment of Christians under the government of Antoninus Pius and of Marcus Antoninus. This favourable view and usual reticence concerning any Christian sufferings during these reigns is largely owing to the high estimation in which the two Antonines as rulers are universally held;—that these great and good Emperors could persecute and harass the followers of Jesus has been usually deemed unlikely if not impossible.

To regard such men as persecutors would be to inflict a stigma on the character of the two most perfect sovereigns whose lives are recorded in history. The first Antoninus received his beautiful title "Pius" at the urgent wish of the Senate, a wish that was universally endorsed by the public opinion of the Empire; by this title he has been known and revered by all succeeding generations.

Marcus, his adopted son and successor, who, if possible, held a yet more exalted place in the estimation of men of his own generation, and who has handed down to posterity a yet higher reputation for virtue and wisdom, tells us in his own glowing and striking words that he owed everything to the noble example and teaching of his adopted father Antoninus Pius. To this Marcus, when he died, divine honours were voluntarily paid with such universal consent that it was held sacrilege not to set up his image in a house.

To brand such men as persecutors, for centuries would have been for any historian, Christian or pagan, too daring a statement, and such an estimate would have been received with distrust, if not with positive derision; nor is it by any means certain that even now such a conclusion will not be

read by many with cold mistrust and even with repulsion. But recent scholarship has clearly demonstrated that the Antonines were bitter foes to Christianity, and that during their reigns the followers of Jesus were sorely harassed. Under the Emperor Marcus the persecutions extended throughout his reign; they were, as Lightfoot does not hesitate to characterize them, "fierce and deliberate." They were aggravated, at least in some cases, by cruel torture. They had the Emperor's direct personal sanction. The scenes of these persecutions were laid in all parts of the Empire—in Rome, in Asia Minor, in Gaul, in Africa.

The martyrdom of Justin and his companions as told in the Acts of the Martyrdom of the great Christian teacher, an absolutely authentic piece, was carried out in Rome under the orders of Rusticus the city prefect, the trusted friend and minister of Marcus, under the Emperor's very eyes; while the persecutions at Vienne and Lyons were the most bloody persecutions on record up to this date, except, perhaps, the Neronian; and for these Marcus Antoninus is directly and personally responsible.

The Madaurian and Scillitan (proconsular Africa) martyrdoms apparently took place a few months after the death of Marcus, but these martyrdoms were certainly a continuation of the persecuting policy of Marcus. And these awful sufferings to which the Christian communities were exposed during these two reigns are not only learned from the few authentic Acts of Martyrdom preserved to us, but from various and numerous notices of contemporary writers which we come upon—embedded in their histories, apologies, and doctrinal expositions. Some of these are quoted[1] verbatim. The testimony we possess here of this continuous and very general persecution during these reigns when carefully massed together is simply overwhelming.[2]

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[1] See pp. 189–90 and 200.

[2] Bishop Lightfoot has been referred to in this brief summary of the position of Christians during these two great reigns. This careful and exact scholar is most definite in his conclusions here, and his views exactly correspond with the views taken in this chapter.

Nor is the behaviour of the two Antonine Emperors, who ruled over the Roman Empire for a period of some forty-two years, towards their Christian subjects in any way at variance with their known principles. Such men, with their lofty ideals, with their firm unyielding persuasion that Rome owed her grandeur and power, her past prosperity and her present position as a World-Empire, to the protection of the Immortals whom their fathers worshipped, could not well have acted differently.

We have seen what was the unvarying policy of Pius in his earnest efforts to restore the purer, simpler life led by the old Romans who had built up the mighty Empire; how faithfully he had followed in the lines traced out by Vergil, who, as we have already quoted, wound up his exquisite picture of the ancient Roman life with the solemn injunction "*in primis venerare deos.*"

The pupil and successor of Pius, the noble Marcus, was if possible more "Roman" than Pius; and his devotion to the gods of Rome was even more marked. As a boy he was famous for his accurate knowledge of ancient Roman ritual. When only eight years old he was enrolled in the College of the Salii, reciting from memory archaic liturgical forms but dimly understood in his days.[1]

Before his departure for the dangerous war with the Marcomanni, he directed that Rome should be ceremonially purified according to the ancient rites; and for seven days the images of the gods were feasted as they lay on their couches in the public streets.

But it is in his private life that the intense piety of the second Antonine emperor comes out with ever startling clearness. It was no mere State reasons which prompted Marcus to uphold the ancient cult of Rome. He evidently believed with a fervent belief in these old gods of Rome. For instance, if his dear friend and tutor Fronto was ailing, he would pray at the altars of the gods that one very dear to him might be eased of his pain.

In that exquisite volume in which in the form of private

[1] This especially refers to the ancient song of the Arval Brotherhood, of which college Marcus was also a member.

and secret memoranda he recorded his inmost thoughts and hopes,—that little volume which amid the wreckage of contemporary literary remains has come down to us intact,—again and again we meet with words telling of his trust in the loving care of the Immortals revered in the Rome of old days, but in whose existence in the later times of the Republic few seem to have believed.

Out of a host of such memoranda scattered in the pages of the *Meditations* we will quote two or three of his words here.

"With respect to the gods, from what I constantly experience of their power, I am convinced that they exist, and I venerate them" (xii. 28).

The whole of the first book of the *Meditations* is, in fact, a hymn of gratitude to the gods for their loving care of him.

"Live with the gods," he writes (v. 2–7); "and he who does live with the gods constantly shows to them that his own soul is satisfied with the (lot) which is assigned to him. . . . Zeus has given to every man for his guardian and his guide a portion of himself."

And again (v. 33), "Until that time (thy end) comes, what is sufficient? Why, what else than to venerate the gods and bless them?"

"If the gods have determined about me, and about the things which must happen to me, they have determined well, for it is not easy even to imagine a deity without forethought" (vii. 4. 4).

That the Antonine Emperors knew little really of Christianity is almost certain. The name of Jesus was probably unknown to either Pius or Marcus, and the canonical Gospels evidently had never come before them, although these writings were generally current among the Christian congregations at that time. Once only in his *Meditations* does Marcus refer to the sect, and then it was clearly with a feeling of dislike and repulsion; their extraordinary readiness to give up their lives for their belief, misliked the calm, stoic Emperor. "The soul," he wrote, "should be ready at any moment to be separated from the body; but this readiness must come from a man's own calm judgment, not from mere

obstinacy and with a tragic show, as with the Christians" (*Meditations*, xi. 3).

Marcus before all things, it must ever be remembered, was a Roman. To the Emperor, the tradition of Rome was a dogma. " Every moment," he wrote, " think ever as a Roman and a man ; do whatever thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity " (II. 5).

That he abhorred the Christian sect who poured scorn upon the traditions he loved, and contempt upon the gods whom he adored, was perfectly natural ; and it must be remembered that not only before the judge when they were arraigned did the Christians express utter disbelief in the gods of Rome, but not unfrequently the more fanatical Christians went out of their way to insult these deities in whom Marcus believed with a real intensity.

When the noble Emperor had passed away, the leniency with which his evil successor Commodus treated the Church was owing largely to his dislike and jealousy of his father and his policy. In the following century (the third) the gentleness of the treatment of Christians in the reigns of Alexander Severus and Philip the Arabian was mainly owing to the fact that these Emperors had little sympathy with the Roman tradition ; they were certainly foreigners : the first of them, Alexander Severus, was a Syrian pure and simple. The name by which Philip is always known tells us of his foreign nationality. The famous persecutors of the third century, Decius, Aurelius and Diocletian, were believers in the Roman tradition, and adopted as the groundwork of their policy here, the principles of Trajan and the Antonines.

No crime was necessary to be proved in these reigns when one of the sect was arraigned. The mere fact of the accused being a Christian ensured at once condemnation. Christianity was utterly incompatible with the ancient traditions of Rome.

BOOK II

THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FAITH

INTRODUCTORY

THE scene of the following sketches of the life of a Christian of the first days is, generally speaking, laid in Rome; but much of what belonged to the Christian of the Roman congregation was common to the believer who dwelt in other great cities of the Empire

The sketches in question deal with the following subjects:

1. The numbers of believers in the first two centuries which followed the death of Peter and Paul.

2. The assemblies or meetings together of the Christian folk in those very early times are specially dwelt on. These assemblies were an extremely important and influential factor in the life of the believer. This was recognized in the New Testament writings and in the contemporary writings of the earliest teachers of the faith.

3. The various classes of the population of a great city which composed these early assemblies are enumerated.

4. What was taught and done at these early gatherings together of Christians is set forth with some detail.

5. Outside these gatherings, the life of a believer in the world is referred to with especial regard to the many difficulties which were constantly encountered by one who professed the religion of Jesus.

6. The methods by which these difficulties were to be grappled with are described. Two schools of teaching evidently existed here, generally characterized as the "Rigourist" and the "Gentle" schools. These are briefly dwelt upon.

7. In the concluding paragraphs of this sketch of the early Christian life, what Christianity offered in return for the hard and often painful life which its professors had to live, is sketched.

I

LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IN THE EARLY DAYS

THERE is no shadow of doubt but that in a comparatively short space of time the religion of Jesus was accepted by great numbers of the dwellers in the various provinces of the Roman Empire. This fact is abundantly testified to by contemporary writers, Christian and pagan.

The only other widely professed religion with which we can compare it—Mahommedanism—owed its rapid progress and the extraordinary numbers of its proselytes mainly to the sword of the conquerors. Christianity, on the other hand, possessed no army to enforce its tenets. It was not even the heritage of a people or a nation. The Jews, to whom in the first days of its existence it *might* have belonged, were very soon to be reckoned among its deadliest foes.

One powerful factor which influenced the reception of the new religion has been rarely dwelt upon, but it deserves more than a merely passing notice.

The news of the religion of Jesus, as by many channels it reached the slave, often a highly educated slave, the freedman, the merchant, the small trader, the soldier of the legions, the lawyer, the Roman patrician, the women of the varied classes and orders in the great Empire,—the news came of something that had quite recently happened; and not only recently, but in a well-known city of the Empire. It was a wonderful story, firmly and strongly attested by many eye-witnesses, and it appealed at once to the hearts of all sorts and conditions of men.

It differed curiously from all other religions of which the pagans of the Empire had ever heard. These other religions were very ancient; their cradle, so to speak, belonged to far back days—pre-historical days, as men would now call

them. *This new religion really belonged to their own time.* Its founder had talked with men quite recently. He had lived in a city they knew a good deal about.

There was no dim mist about its origin; no old legends had gathered round it—legends which few, if any, believed.

The story of the religion of Jesus, told so simply, so convincingly, in the four Gospels, had a strange attraction; it went home to the hearts of a vast multitude; it rang true and real.

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We know that very soon after the date of the events of the Gospel story the numbers of the men and women who accepted it were great. From the pagan Empire we have the testimony of Tacitus, the most eminent of Roman historians. Writing some fifty years after the first persecution under Nero, A.D. 64, he describes the Christians at the time of that first persecution as "a vast multitude" (*ingens multitudo*).[1]

Still more in detail the younger Pliny, the Governor of Bithynia, writing to the Emperor Trajan *circa* A.D. 112–13 for instructions how to deal with the Christians, relates that the new religion had spread so widely in his province, not merely in the cities but in the villages and country districts generally, that the temples were almost deserted.[2] It is, of course, possible that the new faith had found especial favour in Bithynia; but such a formal and detailed representation from an official of the highest rank and reputation to the Emperor of what was happening in his own province, is a sure indication of the enormous strides which Christianity had generally made in the Empire when the echoes of apostles and apostolic men were still ringing in the ears of their disciples. S. John's death only preceded Pliny's letter to Trajan[3] by at most twenty years.

Among contemporary Christian writers we find similar testimony to the vast numbers of Christians in very early times. To take a few conspicuous examples:

[1] Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 44.

[2] Further details of Pliny's report to the Emperor Trajan upon the numbers of Christians in his province will be found above, Book I. pp. 49–62.

[3] Pliny, *Epist. ad Trajan*, 96.

Clement, bishop of Rome *circa* A.D. 95, writing to the Church at Corinth, speaks of "the great multitude of Christians" who suffered in the persecution of Nero, A.D. 64.[1]

Hermas, in his book termed the *Shepherd*, shows us that in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, *circa* A.D. 130–40, there was resident a large number of Christians in the capital, many of them well-to-do and wealthy citizens.

Soter, bishop of Rome, writing to the Church of Corinth,[2] shortly after A.D. 165, refers to the Christians as superior in numbers to the Jews, no doubt especially alluding to the Roman congregation mentioned.

In the Acts of the Martyrdom of Justin, *circa* A.D. 165, an undoubtedly genuine piece, Rusticus the Roman prefect asks Justin where the Christians assembled. In reply, Justin said, "Where each one chooses and can; for do you imagine that we all meet in the very same place?"

Irenæus in a very striking passage,[3] written *circa* A.D. 180, alludes to the size and importance of the Roman congregation. His words are as follows:

"Since, however, it would be most tedious in such a volume as this to reckon up the (Episcopal) succession of all the Churches, we confound all those who assemble in unauthorized meetings by indicating the tradition handed down from the apostles of the *most great*, the very ancient, and universally known Church organized by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul."

The statements of Tertullian *circa* A.D. 195–200 are well known and are often quoted; and though they are probably exaggerated, still such assertions, although they are rhetorical rather than simple statistics, would never have been advanced by such a learned and weighty writer if the numbers of the Christians of his time (the latter years of the second century) had not, in many cities and countries, been very great.

[1] Clement of Rome, *Epist. ad Cor.* vi.

[2] The quotation referred to is from the so-called *2nd Epistle* of Clement of Rome (section 2), which Harnack attributes to Soter, bishop of Rome. Lightfoot, however, places the Epistle even earlier (*circa* A.D. 140), and considers it the work of an anonymous writer.

[3] Irenæus, *adv. Hær.*, book iii. 2.

In the works of Tertullian we come across such statements as the following:

"The grievance (of the pagan government) is that the State is filled with Christians; that they are in the fields, in the citadels, in blocks of houses (which fill up the cities). It grieves (does the government), as over some calamity, that both sexes indifferently, all ages, every condition, even persons of high rank, are passing over to the Christian ranks." [1]

And again: "We are not Indian Brahmins who dwell in forests and exile themselves from the common life of men. . . . We company with you in the world, forsaking neither the life of the Forum, nor the Bath, nor Workshop, nor Inn, nor Market-place, nor any Mart of commerce. We sail with you, fight with you, till the ground with you, even we share in the various arts." [2]

About fifty years after Tertullian's writing just quoted, Cornelius, bishop of Rome, A.D. 251, in an Epistle addressed to Fabius, bishop of Antioch,[3] gives some official statistics of the Roman Church in his days.[4] Cornelius particularizes the classes of the various officials, together with the numbers of persons in distress who were on the lists of the Church receiving charitable relief. Scholars and experts, basing their calculations upon these official statistics, variously estimate the numbers of Christians in the city of Rome at from 30,000 to 50,000, the latter calculation on the whole being probably nearest to the truth.

Lastly, in this little sketch of the vast numbers of disciples who at a very early date had joined the Christian community, the changeless testimony of the Roman catacombs must be cited. Much will be found written in this work regarding these enormous cemeteries of the Christian dead. It is absolutely certain that in the second half of the first century these catacombs were already begun.

The words of the eminent German scholar Harnack may well be quoted here: "The number, the size, and the extent of the Roman catacombs . . . is so great that even from them we may infer the size of the Roman Church, its steady

[1] Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 1.
[2] *Ibid.* 42.
[3] Quoted in Eusebius, *H. E.*, book vi. chap. 43.
[4] See below, p. 120.

growth, its adherents from distinguished families, its spread all over Rome."[1]

The foregoing contemporary witnesses, including the testimony of the Church to the size and numbers of the Christian congregation, speak of the Roman Christians with two notable exceptions—the pagan Pliny and the Christian Tertullian. The others, including Clement of Rome, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Soter, Irenæus, Cornelius, are specially writing of Rome and the Christian portion of its population.

But, as has been already remarked, what was written of Rome in a greater or less degree applies to other great centres of population in the Empire, notably to such centres as Antioch and Ephesus, Alexandria and Carthage.

[1] Professor Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, book iv. chap. iii. sec. 14.

II

THE ASSEMBLIES OF CHRISTIANS

THE Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline and other New Testament Epistles, bear witness to the favourable reception of the preaching of the new faith. Paul's success in Macedonia, Achaia, in the province of Asia, and in Galatia had been extraordinary. Peter in his First Epistle addresses the converts already scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Paul again expressly mentions in a letter to the Roman Christians, that the faith of the Roman Church was spoken of throughout the whole world.

The story of the progress of Christianity was taken up by the pagan writers Tacitus and Pliny, and was dwelt upon by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Justin, Irenæus, and the other Christian writers of the first and second centuries already quoted.

Thus the great numbers of Christians in Rome and in other centres dating from primitive days, already dwelt upon with some detail, is a clear and indisputable fact.

Nothing did more for the progress and extension of the Christian religion than the constant meeting together, the assemblies of the various congregations of believers.

This was recognized from the earliest days. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 25) a solemn injunction to Christians not "to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."

Definite allusions to such "assemblies of believers" occur in the New Testament writings, in the Acts and in the Epistles, *e.g.* 1 Cor. xi. 20 and following verses, Jas. ii. 2–4.

The importance attached to these meetings of believers by the rulers and teachers of the Church of the first days,

is manifest from the chain of reminders and injunctions to the faithful which exists in the contemporary writings we possess of leading Christians, dating from the latter years of the first and all through the second and third centuries.

The words they heard, and the matters decided upon at these gatherings, more or less coloured and guided the life and conduct of Christians in the world. From the first the Sunday meeting seems to have been obligatory; but these meetings of the brethren were by no means confined to the general assembly on Sunday. So we read in the *Didaché* (the Teaching of the Apostles), a writing probably dating from the latter years of the first century: "Thou shalt seek out every day the company of the Saints, to be refreshed by their words."[1] "Let us," writes Clement, bishop of Rome (*circa* A.D. 95), "ourselves then being gathered together in concord with intentness of heart, cry unto Him as from one mouth earnestly, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promise."[2]

So S. Ignatius (*circa* A.D. 107–10) in his Epistle to the Ephesian Church[3] writes: "Do your diligence therefore to meet together more frequently for thanksgiving to God, and for His glory; for when ye meet together frequently the powers of Satan are cast down, and his mischief cometh to nought in the concord of your faith."

In his letter to Polycarp he says: "Let meetings be held more frequently."[4]

Barnabas (*circa* A.D. 120–30): "Keep not apart by yourselves, as if you were already justified; but meet together, and confer upon the common weal.[5]

Justin Martyr—in his first *Apology*, written in the middle of the second century—describes these meetings of the brethren with some detail.[6]

A very striking passage occurs in a writing of Theophilus, the sixth bishop of Antioch, addressed to his friend Autolycus. Its date is between A.D. 168 and A.D. 181. The power which

[1] *Didaché*, iv. 2.
[2] Clement of Rome, *Ep. ad Cor.* 34.
[3] Ignatius, *ad Eph.* 13.
[4] *Ad Polyc.* 4.
[5] Barnabas, *Ep.* 4.
[6] See for detailed account of Justin Martyr's description, p. 113.

these meetings of the brethren exercised over the life of Christians is described as follows:

"As in the Sea there are Islands . . . with havens and harbours in which the storm-tossed may find refuge, so God has given to the world, which is driven and tempest-tossed by sins, assemblies . . . in which survive the doctrines of the truth, as in the island-harbours of good anchorage; and into these run those who desire to be saved . . . and who wish to escape the wrath and judgment of God."[1]

[1] *Theophilus to Autolycus*, xiv.

III

OF WHOM WERE THESE ASSEMBLIES OF BELIEVERS COMPOSED?

FROM the very first days, it is certain that the assemblies or congregations of the Christians were made up of all classes and orders of the people. The lower classes, including slaves, freedmen, artisans, small traders, no doubt were in the majority; but from the beginning, persons of position, culture, and even of rank were certainly reckoned among them.

In the days of the apostles we hear of many such. Among the earliest believers were reckoned a Nicodemus, a Joseph of Arimathea, a Barnabas, a Sergius Paulus. In Acts vi. 7 mention is made of a great company of the priests obedient to the faith. Chapter x. tells us of the centurion who sent for S. Peter. Paul himself and Stephen were men of high culture. Priscilla the wife of Aquila and the Phoebe of Rom. xvi. 1 were evidently persons of considerable means. Others might be named in these categories. S. James (ii. 14) in his picture of one of these meetings alludes to the presence of the rich among the worshippers. Tacitus speaks of a lady of distinguished birth (*insignis femina*) who evidently belonged to the Christian ranks; and very shortly after, some near connexions of the imperial house of Domitian were persecuted for their faith.

Pliny, when he wrote to Trajan, tells him how many of all ranks in the province of Bithynia had joined the Christian sect.

Ignatius in the early years of the second century, writing to the Roman Church, gives utterance to his fear lest influential members of the Church should intercede for him, and so hinder his being exposed to the beasts in the amphitheatre games.

Roman Christians of wealth and position are clearly alluded to by Hermas in the *Shepherd* (Comm. x. 1), and he assumes the presence of such in the Roman congregation (Simil. i. etc.)

In the famous dialogue of Minucius Felix, *circa* A.D. 160, the speakers belong to the higher ranks; these under thinly disguised names were probably actual personages well known in their day. The scene and story of the writing, the class of argument brought forward, all evidently issued from and were addressed to a highly cultured circle.

In the writings of Justin Martyr, dating from about the middle of the second century, are various references to the presence of wealthy and cultured persons in the Christian congregation of Rome.

Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, whose pictures of Christian life belong to the latter years of the second century, bear ample testimony to the same fact. Clement even wrote a special treatise entitled, *What rich man can be saved?* in which he refers not to pagans whose conversion to Christianity was to be aimed at, but to those who were Christians and at the same time wealthy.[1]

Tertullian again and again refers to the presence of the rich and the noble in the Christian Churches, in such passages where he speaks of thousands of every age and rank among the brethren—of officials of the Empire, of officers of the imperial household, of lawyers, and even of men of senatorial rank. In his passionate appeals, too, he singles out fashionable ladies, and dwells on their costly dress and jewels.

But the most striking proof of the presence of many high-born and wealthy members of the Christian Brotherhood in this congregation dating from primitive times, after all exists in that wonderful City of the Dead beneath the suburbs of Rome which is now being explored.

These Roman catacombs, as they are termed, in the large

[1] Harnack well observes that among Clement of Alexandria's writings, the *Pædagogus* evidently assumes that the Church for which its teaching was designed embraced a large number of cultured people.

The same conclusion must be arrived at in respect of many of Irenæus' writings. Irenæus wrote in the last quarter of the second century.

majority of cases in the first instance began in the villa gardens of the rich, and were, as time went on, enlarged by their owners in order to offer the hospitality of the tomb to their poorer brothers and sisters.

As we shall see in our chapter dealing with these all-important memories of early Roman Christianity, as cemetery after cemetery is examined we come upon more and more relics in marble and stone which tell of great and powerful Roman families who had thrown in their lot with the despised and persecuted people who had accepted the story of Jesus of Nazareth, and who, in common with the slave and petty tradesman, shared in the hard trials of the Christian life, and welcomed the joys and solace of the glorious Christian hope.

These striking memories of the Christian dead, who in life bore great names and possessed ample means, date from the first century onward. One of the more famous of these very early catacombs, the cemetery of Domitilla, was the work of the members of the imperial family—of near relatives of the Emperor Domitian.

Indeed the composition of the meetings of the Christian Brotherhood varied very little from the days of Peter and Paul to the era of the Emperor Constantine. The numbers of these assemblies, however, increased with strange rapidity. There were, of course, in primitive times but few of these assemblies. By the end of the third century there were in the city of Rome some forty basilicas, each with its separate staff of ministers and its individual congregation.[1]

[1] The more eminent of the Gnostic teachers who in the first instance separated themselves from the Christian congregations, as far as we can judge from the comparatively rare fragments which we possess of their writings, evidently had in view highly cultured readers and listeners. We allude especially to Valentinus and his famous pupil Heracleon. These Gnostic writers taught and wrote in the second half of the second century. The period of activity of the second of these, Heracleon, is generally given as *circa* A.D. 170–80. Valentinus was somewhat earlier.

IV

WHAT WAS SAID AND DONE IN THESE ASSEMBLIES AND MEETINGS OF THE BRETHREN

JUSTIN Martyr in his first *Apology*, which was written, before A.D. 139, gives us a good picture of one of these primitive Christian assemblies in Rome. The early date of this writing enables us to form an accurate idea of the outward procedure of one of these most important factors in the Christian life in the first half of the second century.

Justin has been explaining the nature of the Eucharist; he then goes on to say: "We continually remind each other of these things. And the rich among us help the poor, and we always keep together; and for all things which are given us, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the 'Memoirs of the Apostles' or the writings of the Prophets are read, as time allows; then when the reader has done, the president (of the assembly), in an address, instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of the good things (which had formed the subject of the address). Then we all rise and pray; and when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability; and the people assent, saying, Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given; and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

"And they who are well-to-do and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those who are

in bonds, and the stranger sojourning among us—in a word, takes care of all who are in need.

"Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly."

Justin goes on to explain the reason of the choice of Sunday, dwelling especially on the fact of Jesus Christ having risen from the dead on that day.

Such is a sketch of the framework of one of these primitive meetings of the Christian Brotherhood, drawn by an eye-witness some time in the first half of the second century, at most thirty or forty years after S. John's death.

It is a little picture of a gathering composed of all sorts and conditions of men and women, of slaves and freedmen, of artisans, tradesmen, and soldiers, with a certain admixture of cultured and wealthy persons, drawn together in the first instance by the pressure of the burden of the awful sadness of life, by a belief, hazy at first, but growing clearer and more definite every day, as the congregation listened to these teachers who dwelt on the words and acts of the Divine Redeemer who had visited this earth for their sakes.

For they came together to hear more of the Redeemer who had sojourned so lately among men. They listened while the Christian teacher who presided over the gathering explained the historic words, the commandments and promises of that pitiful, loving Master who had entered into their life; they would then partake of the mystic Eucharist feast together; and as they partook of the sacred bread and wine as He had bidden His followers to do in memory of Him and His death and suffering for their sakes, they would feel He was indeed in their midst, and that new life, new hope were theirs.

The dogmatic teaching in these early assemblies was very simple, but strangely sublime. It was given in a language every one could understand. It went home to the hearts of all —of the wise and unlearned alike. The story of the Gospels, the wonderful words of the Master—were at once the text and subject of every sermon and exposition.

We have among our precious reliquiæ of the earliest days enough to show us what was the groundwork of this primitive teaching.

An *atonement* had been made by the Divine One who had come among men; He had suffered for them, and by His suffering had redeemed them. In all the earliest Christian writings which we possess, this great truth is repeated again and again. With adoring gratitude the Christian Brotherhood loved and worshipped Him. Jesus Christ was the centre of all their hopes—the source of their strange, newly found happiness.[1]

Very briefly we will quote a very few of these important dogmatic sayings pressed home to the believers when they met together.

Clement of Rome—circa A.D. 95:

"Let us fix our eyes on *the blood of Christ*, and understand how precious it is unto His Father, because being *shed for our salvation.*"—*Ep.* i. 7.

"Let us fear the Lord Jesus whose blood was given for us."—*Ep.* i. 11.

"Jesus Christ our Lord hath given His blood for us, by the will of God . . . His life for our lives."—*Ep.* i. 49.

Ignatius of Antioch—circa A.D. 107–10.

"It is evident to me that you are living not after men but after Jesus Christ who died for us, that believing on His death ye might escape death."—*Ep. ad Trall.* 2.

"Him (Jesus Christ) I seek, who died on our behalf; Him I desire, who rose again (for our sake)."—*Ep. ad Rom.* 6.

After relating the passion of the Cross, Ignatius went on to say: "For He suffered these things for our sakes (that we might be saved)."—*Ep. ad Smyrn.* 1, 2.

"Even the heavenly beings, and the glory of the angels, and the rulers visible and invisible, if they believe not in the blood of Christ (who is God), judgment awaiteth them also."—*Ep. ad Smyrn.* 6.

"Await Him . . . the Eternal, the Invisible, who became visible for our sakes; the Impalpable, the Impassible, who

[1] This is strikingly put by F. W. Myers in his poem "S. Paul":

"This hath he done and shall we not adore Him?
This shall He do and can we still despair?
Come let us quickly fling ourselves before Him,
Cast at His feet the burden of our care."

suffered for our sake, who endured in all ways for our sake."—*Ep. ad Polycarp*, 3.

Epistle to Diognetus,—early in second century,—an anonymous writing:

"He Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities, He gave His own Son as a ransom for us, the Holy One for transgressors, the blameless One for the wicked, the righteous One for the unrighteous, the incorruptible One for the corruptible, the immortal One for them that are mortal."

"For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other One was it possible that we, the wicked and the ungodly, could be justified, than by the only Son of God?"

"Oh sweet exchange! Oh unsearchable operation! Oh benefits surpassing expectation! that the wickedness of many shall be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors!"

"Having therefore convinced us in the former time that our nature was unable to attain to life, and having now revealed the Saviour who is able to save even those things which it was (formerly) impossible to save, by both these facts He desired to lead us to trust in His kindness, to deem Him our Minister—Father—Teacher—Counsellor—Healer—our Wisdom, Light, Honour, Glory, Power and Life."—*Ep. ad Diog.* ix.

Shepherd of Hermas—written *circa* A.D. 140.

"He Himself (the Son of God) then having purged away the sins of the people, showed them the paths of life, by giving them the law which He received from His Father."

Epistle of Barnabas—written *circa* A.D. 120–50:

"For to this end the Lord endured to deliver up His flesh to corruption, that we might be sanctified through the remission of sins, which is effected by His blood of sprinkling."—*Ep. Barnabas*, v.

"If, therefore, the Son of God, who is Lord (of all things), and who will judge the living and the dead, suffered, that His stroke might give us life, let us believe that the Son of God could not have suffered except for our sakes."—*Ep. Barnabas*, vii.

"Thou shalt love Him that created thee, thou shalt glorify Him that redeemed thee from death."—*Ep. Barnabas*, xix.

Justin Martyr—writing between *circa* A.D. 114 and A.D. 165:

"Isaiah," wrote Justin, "did not send you to a laver, there to wash away murder and other sins; but those who repented were purified by faith through the blood of Christ, and through His death, who died for this very reason."—*Dial. with Trypho*, xiii.

Writing of Jesus Christ, Justin comments thus on the words written by Moses as prophesied by the patriarch Jacob: "He shall wash his garments with wine, and his vesture with the blood of the grape." This signified that "He (Jesus Christ) would wash those who believe in Him with His own blood."—*Dial. with Trypho*, liv.

"If, then, the Father of all wished His Christ to take upon Him the curses of all, knowing that after He had been crucified and was dead, He would raise Him up" . . .

"For although His Father caused Him to suffer these things in behalf of the human family" . . .

"If His Father wished Him to suffer thus in order that by His stripes the human race might be healed."—*Dial. with Trypho*, xcv.

"And as the blood of the Passover saved those who were in Egypt, so also the blood of Christ will deliver from death those who have believed."—*Dial. with Trypho*, cxi.

In well-nigh all these reliquiæ of the earliest Christian teaching, copious use was made of that wonderful 53rd chapter of Isaiah, in which the Hebrew seer sketched with a startling accuracy of detail some of the leading features of the awful drama of the Divine Atonement for all sin.[1] The scene of this drama was the storied Holy City, and the One who made the great Atonement was He who on earth was known as Jesus Christ and in heaven as the Son of God.

[1] The more notable of the *Atonement* prophecy passages in Isaiah were:

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastening of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. . . . He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. liii.).

The above "Catena Aurea" (golden chain) of passages is taken from the works we possess of the earliest teachers of Christianity who wrote in the fifty years immediately following the passing of S. John the beloved apostle, and they tell us exactly what was *the* doctrine pressed home to the Brotherhood in the early assemblies of Christians of which we are here speaking.

There were other dogmas, no doubt, included in the teaching of these early assemblies and meetings, such as the resurrection of the flesh; the great reckoning before the Judge, at which even the just would tremble were it not that the Judge was at the same time their Redeemer and loving Friend. The unspeakable joys of Paradise, the garden of their God and Saviour, were constantly dwelt upon, and the good glad tidings would fall like dew from heaven upon the world-weary, sad-eyed listeners.

But the great doctrine of the "Atonement," at once simple and sublime, so repeatedly pressed home in the above quoted words of the earliest teachers, was no doubt the strongest inducement which drew the Christian folk to meet often together—was *the* link which bound them into one brotherhood, and knit them at the same time to the loving Master.

It was a new preaching, this secret of the great love of God which passeth understanding, and one that excited wonderful and soul-stirring fears and hopes, and which filled the small dark corridors and low-browed chapels of the Roman catacombs which the faithful often used as meeting-homes for teaching and for prayer, with what seemed to the groups of worshippers verily a Divine light; and to these early Christian worshippers, the gloomy rough-hewn sleeping-places of the dead, through which the pilgrim traveller now wanders and wonders, seemed to them the very ante-chambers of heaven.

We have dwelt with some insistence upon the dogmatic teaching which without doubt formed a part, and that by no means an inconsiderable part, of the procedure of the primitive gatherings of Christians; for it is often urged that the great bond which united the brethren of the very early Church

was only the beautiful mutual love and charity urged in these gatherings.

There is some truth in this assertion. It was a new life which was preached, and to a certain extent lived, by the Christian Brotherhood. It was a life quite different to anything which had existed before the Redeemer went in and out among men. We shall dwell on it presently; but it must never be forgotten that the mainspring of this new life was the doctrine of the Cross—of the *Atonement* made by that Divine One who had founded the new religion.

The belief in the supreme Divinity of Jesus, who had come from heaven to redeem men, was the foundation story of the wonderful love and boundless charity which lived in their midst,—a love which charmed the hearts of all sorts and conditions of men, and attracted more and ever more weary and heavy-laden men and women to join the company of Christians.

Almsgiving

The duty and delight of materially assisting the poor and sad-eyed brothers and sisters of the community became an absorbing passion in the lives of very many of the rich and well-to-do members of each congregation; and in populous centres the abundance of the alms publicly contributed or privately given is a sure indication that many well-to-do and even wealthy persons were at an early date numbered among the Christians.

The splendid charities of the Church of the first days no doubt did much to bring about the rapid progress of the religion of Jesus. There was an intense reality in the love of the Christians of the first days for one another. "See," says Tertullian (*Apol.* xxxix., quoting from the pagan estimate of the new society, "how they love one another." So Cæcilius (in *Minucius Felix*, ix.) tells us "they love one another almost before they are acquainted."

Justin Martyr, in his picture already quoted of a Christian assembly in the first half of the second century, speaks, as we have seen, in detail of the destination of the alms collected.[1]

[1] See above, pp. 113, 114.

Tertullian, writing in the last years of the same century on what took place at these meetings of the brethren, relates how "each of us puts in a small amount one day in the month, or whenever he pleases, but only if he pleases, and if he is able; for there is no compulsion in the matter, every one contributing of his own free will. The amounts so collected are expended on poor orphans, in support of old folk, . . . on those who are in the mines, or exiled, or in prison, so long as their distress is for the sake of God's fellowship."

We notice how often it is repeated that all these offerings are purely voluntary—the idea of communism [1] was absolutely unknown in the Church of the first days. The fact that there were rich and poor is ever acknowledged. This is especially marked in the tombs of the catacombs, where the rich were laid to sleep in costly and even in splendidly adorned chambers, leading out of the corridors where the bodies of the poorer ones were tenderly and reverently buried, but in far humbler and unadorned resting-places.

In less that fifty years after Tertullian's time, Cornelius, bishop of Rome, in a letter written *circa* A.D. 250 (quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.* vi. 43), gives us a fairly exhaustive catalogue of the officials and the persons in distress supported by the voluntary contributions of the Roman Brotherhood. He enumerates forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers, together with fifteen hundred widows and persons in poverty maintained constantly by the alms of the faithful.

It is evident from the references in writings of the second century that almsgiving in the Church of the first days occupied in the hearts of believers a higher place, a far more important

[1] If the experiment of "communism" in the early Christian Church was ever tried, it was in the congregation of Jerusalem, and there it is clear that the results were simply disastrous; very soon the Church of Jerusalem was reduced to the direst straits. There are very many allusions to this state of things in S. Paul's Epistles, where collections for the "poor saints in Jerusalem" are constantly mentioned; yet even in that Church, where apparently some attempt at a community of goods was evidently made, entire renunciation was evidently, as we see in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, never obligatory, but was ever purely voluntary.

position, than it filled in the dogmatic teaching of mediæval and yet later times.

The immeasurable work effected by the blessed Redeemer is never minimized by the earliest and most weighty of the Christian teachers, as we have seen in our little chain of quoted passages; but it is indisputable that they considered that something might be done by men themselves. Alms, according to these early instructors, held a very high position in the new beautiful life they taught men who loved the Lord to strive after.

We will quote a few prominent examples of this very early teaching which, of course, was pressed home to the Brotherhood who gathered together in these primitive assemblies; and to a large extent we see that this somewhat peculiar dogmatic teaching concerning the value of almsgiving had a marked and striking effect upon the listeners.

For instance, in the *Didaché* (Teaching of the Apostles), written in the last years of the first century, we read:

"If thou possessest (anything) by thy hands, thou shalt give a ransom for thy sins."—*Didaché*, iv.

This was no new idea in Hebrew theology; see Dan. iv. 27: "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." See Prov. xvi. 6, and also Tob. xii. 8, 9.

So in the *Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs*, put out in the first quarter of the second century:

"For in proportion as a man is pitiful to the poor, will the Lord be pitiful towards him" (Zabulon 7).

"Almsgiving therefore is a good thing, even as repentance from sin. Fasting is better than prayer, but almsgiving than both; and 'love covereth a multitude of sins,'[1] but prayer out of a good conscience delivereth from death. Blessed is every man that is found full of these. For almsgiving lifteth off the burden of sin."—*2nd Epistle of Clement* (part of an ancient homily put out *circa* A.D. 130 to 150).[2]

[1] The writer here evidently means "atones for a multitude of our own sins"; so Tertullian, *Scorpiace*, 6 (see Bishop Lightfoot, *Clement of Rome*, part i. vol. ii. p. 232).

[2] See note (p. 104) on authorship and date of *2nd Epistle* of Clement of Rome.

S. Cyprian about the middle of the third century develops almsgiving into a formal means of grace, and indeed assigns a distinct propitiatory value to alms, representing them as a means of prolonging the effectiveness of baptism and abolishing subsequent frailties.[1]

Lactantius—Inst. vi. 12—*circa* end of fourth century:

"Mercy has a great reward (*magna est misericordiæ merces*), for God promises to it that He will remit all sins."

S. Chrysostom speaks of this as "the medicine for our sins."

In the *Apostolical Constitutions*, vii. 12 (probably put out in the form that we possess them *circa* the end of the fourth or early in the fifth century), we read:

"If thou hast (acquired anything by the work of thy hands) give, that thou mayest labour for the redemption of thy sins; for by alms and acts of faith sins are purged away."

All this is somewhat an exaggerated development of a teaching which in the primitive Church undoubtedly elevated almsgiving to a chief place in Christian practice; but that charity and kindness to the poor and needy in primitive times often were regarded positively as *a formal means of grace*, is clear from the weighty early references just quoted, such honoured names as Cyprian and later even Chrysostom appearing among the supporters of this view. That it was an exaggerated estimate is, however, clear from the plain words of Paul in his exquisite Psalm of Love (1 Cor. xiii.), where under the general term of love or charity he expressly includes much besides mere almsgiving.

But, apart from this somewhat curious development and perhaps exaggerated view, there remains the undisputed fact that almsgiving was urged upon the primitive congregations of Christians with a force and insistency quite unknown in mediæval and modern times; and the splendid voluntary generosity to the poor and needy and forlorn on the part not only of the well-to-do, but of all who had anything to give, however little, was no doubt a most important element in the rapid extension of the Christian religion. It demonstrated, as nothing else could, the real and intense love of Christians one for the other. It was verily a brotherhood, and

[1] See Archbishop Benson, *Cyprian*, vi. 1.

constantly, even in the most exalted quarters,[1] evoked the grudging admiration of the bitterest foes of the religion of Jesus.

. . . . . .

So numerous, so touching. so insistent are the early references here, that it would be simply impossible to quote even a small part of them. But a very few examples from early writings will, however, show what was the nature of the exhortations and teaching here which we know were pressed home in every one of these early gatherings of the Christian Brotherhood.

The *1st Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* (*circa* A.D. 90 or earlier) has been well described as matchless in early Christian literature as an elaborate and effective piece of writing, lit up with all the brotherly affection of the Church.

Such sentences as these occur in the Epistle: "Who did not proclaim your splendid hospitality (to strangers)—you did everything without respect of persons . . . you are more ready to give than to take. Day and night you agonized for all the Brotherhood, that by means of comparison and care the number of God's elect might be saved. You never rued an act of kindness, but were ready for every good work."

In the *Didaché* (Teaching of the Apostles) we come across such directions as—

"To every one that asketh thee give, and ask not back; for to all the Father wishes to give of His own gracious gifts."

"Blessed is he that giveth. . . . Let thine alms drop like sweat into thy hands, so long as thou knowest to whom thou givest." This last injunction, from the way it is introduced, is probably a reference to some unwritten traditional saying spoken by our Lord Himself.—*Didaché*, i.

"Thou shalt not hesitate to give, nor in giving shalt thou murmur."—*Didaché*, iv.

"Thou shalt not turn away from the needy, but thou shalt share all things with thy brother; and thou shalt not say that

[1] The Emperor Julian's well-known Letter to Arsacius is a good example. It is clear that charity did not restrict itself to the "Household of Faith." Cyprian and his congregation's action in the Great Plague of Carthage is a good example of this. See below, p. 127.

they are thine own: for if ye are fellow partakers in that which is immortal, how much more in things which are mortal." —*Didaché*, iv.

Aristides—circa A.D. 130–40:

"They (the Christians) love one another, and from the widows they do not turn away their countenance, and they rescue the orphan . . . and he who has, gives to him who has not without grudging . . . and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs. . . . And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days, that they may supply the needy with their necessary food."[1]—*Apol.* xv.

Hermas—Shepherd—circa A.D. 135–40:

"You know that you, servants of God, dwell in a foreign land, for your city is far from this city. If, then, you know the city where you are to dwell, why provide yourselves here with fields and costly luxuries? He who makes such provision for this city has no mind to return to his own city. . . . Instead of fields, then, buy souls in trouble as each of you is able. Visit widows and orphans, and neglect them not; expend on such fields and houses, God has given you your wealth and all your gains. The Master endowed you with riches that you might perform such ministries for Him.

"Far better is it to buy fields, possessions, houses of this kind. Thou wilt find them in thine own city when thou dost visit it. Such expenditure is noble and joyous: it brings gladness, not fear and sorrow."—Simil. i.

Harnack, *Mission, etc., of Christianity* (book ii. chap. i.), commenting on this passage of the *Shepherd*, has an interesting and suggestive Note, in which he says: "For all the

[1] The last clause is a very important one. It tells us that to the collections made in the assembly for the poor and needy, even the poorest artisan and slave contributed, and positively fasted for two or three days that they might save the necessary few coins to help those poorer and more sorrowful than themselves.

On this beautiful act of Christian charity, see, too, such passages as Hermas *Shepherd*, Simil. iii.

vigour of his counsel, however, it never occurs to Hermas that the distinction between the rich and the poor should cease within the Church. This is plain from the next Similitude or Parable (ii.). The saying of Jesus, too, S. John xii. 8, 'The poor ye have always with you,' shows that the abolition of the distinction between rich and poor was never contemplated in the Church."

Hermas—Shepherd.—"Not hesitating as to whom you are to give or not to give, for God wishes His gifts to be shared by all."—Comm. 2.

"Rescuing the servants of God from necessities—being hospitable, for in hospitality good doing finds a field."—Comm. 8.

Polycarp—Epistle (written early in the second century):

"In love of the brotherhood, kindly affectioned one to another . . . when ye are able to do good, defer it not, for pitifulness delivereth from death."—*Epistle*, 10.

A short sketch of the practical side of the teaching current at these meetings of the brethren will complete our description of these primitive Christian gatherings. The teaching dwelt on duties for the most part absolutely novel to the Roman world of the first and second centuries of our era. The inescapable duties pressed home to the listeners were duties generally quite unknown to noble, artisan, or slave in Roman society of the first three centuries. If carried out they would essentially change the old view of life current in all grades of the Roman world.

As before, we draw our information exclusively from the remains of very early Christian letters (Epistles) and tractates of well-known and honoured teachers in the Brotherhood which have been preserved to us.

The practical side of the teaching current in the gatherings was very largely based on the strange, beautiful, but perfectly novel saying of the Founder of the religion. It was, in fact, a new language which was used:

"*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" The instructions given in the early assemblies defined the term "neighbour," and explained how the love enjoined was to be especially shown.

Now in all the early Christian writings the persons to be helped in the first place seem invariably to have been "*the widows and orphans*" of the new Society; for example, *S. James*, the Lord's disciple, writes how "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction," etc. (i. 27).

Hermas—circa A.D. 135–40—in his list of good deeds which ought to be done, after faith and the fear of the Lord—love, concord, words of righteousness, truth, patience—places "the helping widows, looking after orphans." —*Shepherd*, Comm. viii.

Aristides—circa A.D. 130–40—has been already quoted.

Clement of Rome—circa A.D. 90—gives as one of his quotations: "He—the Master of the Universe—saith, . . . Give judgment for the orphan, and execute righteousness for the widows."—*1 Epistle*, 8.

Lactantius—circa last years of fourth century—in his catalogue of the different kinds of benevolence and works of mercy which had especially been enjoined on Christians, twice dwells on this peculiar work, and then writes: "Nor is it less a great work of justice to protect and defend orphans and widows who are destitute and stand in need of assistance, and therefore that Divine Law prescribes this to all," etc. . . . And again: "For God, to whom everlasting mercy belongs, commands that widows and orphans should be defended and cherished, that no one through regard and pity for his loved ones should be prevented from suffering death (*i.e.* martyrdom)" . . . "but should meet it with promptitude and faith, since he knows that he leaves his beloved ones to the care of God, and that they will never want protection." This last telling argument repeated by Lactantius had been, no doubt, frequently taught in the days of stress and trial.

These very early references might be multiplied; we find this injunction again and again repeated. It is no exaggeration to assert that among the poor and sad-eyed ones placed before the congregations of believers to help, the poor widow and the orphan occupy the first place.

The Sick.—The visiting the sick and distributing the alms of the brethren, public and private, were also urged as an

inescapable duty. This stood in the forefront of all their exhortations, and the injunction was ever generously responded to. To quote references here, where they are so very numerous, would be superfluous. Lactantius' words, in his summary above referred to, will suffice to show what was the mind of the Church, and how this wish of the Master's had been constantly urged.

Justin Martyr has well summarized the loved duty—"To undertake the care and support of the sick, who need some one to assist them, is the part of the greatest kindness, and is of great beneficence; and he who shall do this, will both offer a living sacrifice to God, and that which he has given to another for a time he will himself receive from God for eternity."—Justin, vi. 12.

So prominent a place did the giving of alms to the sick occupy among the exhortations addressed to the Christians of the first days, that the injunctions to succour the sick sufferers seem not infrequently to have been extended beyond the circle of the "Household of faith." We find S. Cyprian, for instance, on the occasion of the great plague of Carthage, A.D. 252, telling, in one of his addresses, his audience that to cherish our own people was nothing wonderful, but surely he who would become perfect must do more; he must love even his enemies, as the Lord admonishes and expects.

"It is our duty not to fall short of our splendid ancestry." In the saintly bishop's own grand untranslatable words—"Respondere nos decet natalibus nostris."[1] The Christians of Carthage, as their reply, at once raised amongst themselves an abundant fund, and forming a company for the succour of the sick, absolutely helped all without any inquiry as to whether the sick sufferers were pagan or Christian.—Pontius, *Life of Cyprian.*

Eusebius (*H. E.* ix. 8) gives a pathetic picture of the great pestilence which raged at the end of the third century, and notices the devoted behaviour of the Christians to all the sick and dying, without reference to the sufferer's creed.

This splendid altruism of the "Godless Galilean" was

[1] Archbishop Benson happily paraphrases Cyprian's words thus: *Noblesse oblige. S. Cyprian*, vi. 1, 2.

markedly referred to by the Emperor Julian—"Not only their own poor, but ours do they care for," wrote the great Emperor; "*our poor* lack our care," was his bitter reproach to paganism.—*Letter to Arsacius.*

Hospitality was another urgent recommendation pressed home by the early Christian teachers to their flocks. Clement of Rome (quoted above) in the first century dwells on this special virtue in his Letter to the Corinthian Church.

The *Didaché—circa* end of first century—dwells on this. "If he who comes is a traveller, help him to the best of your ability" (chap. xii.).

Much is said in this very early treatise on the duty of caring for strangers, but care is specially enjoined to guard against any imposture here.

Hermas in the *Shepherd* writes: "In hospitality, good-doing finds a field" (Comm. viii.).

Aristides, quoted above, tells us how Christians "when they see the stranger, bring him to their dwellings, and rejoice over him as over a true brother."

Justin Martyr (quoted above), in his picture of a Christian meeting on Sunday, especially directs that out of the alms contributed by the faithful, among those who were to be succoured were "the strangers sojourning amongst us."—1 *Apol.* lxvii.

Melito of Sardis—so Eusebius, *H. E.* iv. 26, tells us—wrote a treatise "on hospitality."

Cyprian expressly directs that the expenses of any stranger who may happen to be in want, be paid out of certain moneys he had left for that purpose.—*Ep.* vii.

Among other direct references to this duty may be quoted Tertullian, *ad Uxor.* ii. 4, and the *Apost. Constit.* iii. 3; the Emperor Julian in his Letter to Arsacius wishes the pagans would imitate these Christian practices.

This striking and unique custom, which no doubt very largely contributed to the feeling of Christian brotherhood, was, of course, based upon the directions so often repeated in the New Testament Epistles.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares," Heb. xiii. 2. "Dis-

tributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality," Rom. xii. 13. "Use hospitality one to another, without grudging," 1 Pet. iv. 9. "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers," 3 John 5, etc.

This urgent recommendation to practise hospitality in the New Testament Epistles of Peter and Paul, of John and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, repeated with insistence and earnestness by writers of the second and third centuries, was, as Justin Martyr tells us in his picture of the Sunday gathering of Christians, incorporated among the special exhortations to the brethren urging them to generous almsgiving.

The duty of "hospitality" thus pressed home at these gatherings as important enough to rank with the claims of the widow and the orphan and the sick poor, needs a few words of explanation.

In the early days of Christianity it must be borne in mind that the widely extended world of Rome was not as in mediæval and modern times, made up of different nations and peoples, but that the Roman world was all one, that men were fellow-subjects of one great Empire, and that the passing to and fro from land to land was far more common than in after times; and that Christians, whether belonging to Asia or to Greece, to Italy or to Gaul, made up one great Brotherhood.

For a Christian coming into a strange city to find there at once a home and a warm welcome, and if poor and needy, help and assistance, would constitute a very powerful inducement to very many to join the new Society in which lived such a spirit of loving brotherhood and kindness.

Special means of intercourse through letters and messages and other means were provided. Cæcilius in *Minucius Felix* (c. ix.), an early writing, as we have said, belonging to the middle of the second century or even earlier, especially tells us that "Christians recognize each other by means of secret marks and signs, and love one another almost before they are acquainted."

It was to give effect to this far-reaching spirit of brotherhood that the apostles and their successors insisted so earnestly upon the new and beautiful duty of "hospitality."

It was a practical proof that all Christians were really brothers and sisters—" that goodness among the Christians was not an impotent claim or a pale ideal, but a power which was developed on all sides, and was actually exercised in common everyday life."

We have dwelt at some length upon what were the principal objects to which the alms of the Brotherhoood, asked so earnestly at the various weekly assemblies, were devoted; there were, however, other " causes " pleaded for besides these—no doubt principally in such great centres as Rome, where a proportion of rich and well-to-do persons formed part of the little gatherings; of these, relief and assistance to " prisoners of the faith " occupy a prominent place.

There were many Christians, especially in the more acute periods of persecution, who were arrested and imprisoned by the government, and not a few condemned to the harsh discipline of the mines. Justin Martyr especially names assistance to imprisoned Christians as one of the regular objects to which a portion of the collections at the " meetings " was devoted. It was ever a matter of love, if not of absolute duty, to help and succour these. " If," wrote Aristides in his *Apology* quoted above, " the Christians learn that any one of their number is imprisoned or is in distress for the sake of the Name of Christ, they should all render aid to such a one in his necessity." —*Apol.* xv.

See, too, among other references, Heb. x. 34; Tert. *ad Mart.* i., and *Apol.* xxxix.

Another and special object of almsgiving pressed upon the faithful was help to other and perhaps distant Churches who from one cause or other were in want. We find this urged upon Christian congregations even in apostolic days.

In S. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, Romans, and Corinthians we find various appeals to the generosity of these early communities to assist the Church at Jerusalem. The deep poverty of this famous Church we have already suggested was probably owing to the attempt of the Jerusalem Christians literally to carry out the idea of community of goods.

In the Letter of Dionysius of Corinth to the Roman Church written *circa* A.D. 170, quoted by Eusebius, *H. E.* iv. 23, we

find this generosity referred to as a well-known custom of the comparatively wealthy Roman congregation. "From the very first," wrote Dionysius, "you have had this practice of aiding all the brethren in many ways, and of sending contributions to many Churches in every city . . . by these gifts you keep up the hereditary custom of the Roman Christians, a practice which your bishop, Soter, has not only kept up, but even extended." In the third century, Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, writing to Stephen, bishop of Rome, alludes to the generous help given to the poor Churches of Syria and Arabia. "To them," he says, "you send help regularly."—Euseb. *H. E.* viii. 5.

Ignatius, referring to this noble generosity of the Roman congregations as early as the first years of the second century, styles the Church of Rome as "the leader of love."

Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, several times mentions how the Church at Carthage, evidently a wealthy community, was in the habit of sending help to other and needy communities.

But there was one department in the novel teaching pressed home by the early Christian teachers which seems at once to have riveted the attention of the listeners, and its universal acceptance at once won extraordinary, possibly an undreamed of popularity in the Christian ranks. It was an entirely new departure from any custom prevalent in the world of Rome—the injunction reverently to care for *the bodies of the dead poor.*

The Emperor Julian in his summary of what he considered the chief points in the hated Christian system which had won them so many hearts, especially calls attention to this. He wrote this remarkable comment here :

"This godlessness (*i.e.* Christianity) is mainly furthered by its charity towards strangers, and its *careful attention to the bestowal of the dead.*"—*Letter to Arsacius,* in Soz. v. 15.

Lactantius in his review of the Christian virtues urged by the great teachers of the new religion, and to a great extent practised in the early centuries, gives a prominent and detailed notice of this pious and loving custom, and strikingly writes as follows : "The last and greatest office of piety is the burying

of strangers and the poor," adding that the noblest pagan teachers of virtue and justice had never touched at all upon this inescapable duty. These had left this, he adds, quite out, because they were unable to see any advantage in it.

Some of these pagan teachers, he goes on to say, even esteemed burial as superfluous, adding that it was no evil to lie unburied and neglected.

The great fourth century writer proceeds at some length to give some of the reasons which had influenced Christians so tenderly to care for their brethren who had fallen asleep: "We will not suffer the image and workmanship of God to lie exposed as a prey to beasts and birds, but we will restore it to earth from which it was taken; and although it be in the case of an unknown person, we will supply the place of relatives, whose place, since they are wanting, let benevolence take."—Lactantius, *Inst.* vi. 12.

Aristides—middle years of second century—thus dwells upon the tender solicitude of the Christian folk for their dead: "When one of their poor passes away from the world, one of them (the brethren) looks after him, and sees to his burial according to his means."—*Apol.* xv.

Aristides is here referring to the private charity of individual members of the community, which was often very lavish in the early centuries. Tertullian, on the other hand, writing on the same duty of caring for the brethren, includes the cost of "burying the poor" as coming out of the common fund made up of the money contributed at the public meetings of the Brotherhood.—*Apol.* xxxix.

As the amount required for these burials and the subsequent care bestowed on the places of Christian sepulture was very considerable, the public collections made in the assemblies were necessarily often largely supplemented by private alms.

All this loving care for the remains of the deceased went home to numberless hearts among the survivors of the loved, and evidently ranked high among the reasons which attracted many into the ranks of the Christian Brotherhood.

In our little picture of very early Christian life, Rome and its powerful Church has been generally selected as the scene of the life in question. In this primitive custom of reverent care

for the dead,—a care which embraced the very poor as well as the rich and well-to-do, we discern the reasons which led to the first beginnings of the vast city of the Christian dead,—the wonderful city known as the Roman catacombs. This will be carefully described at some length in this work: the building and excavating of the endless corridors, the private chambers, the chapels and meeting-rooms, began even before the close of the first century of the Christian era, and went on for some two centuries and a half—the long-drawn-out age of persecution.

They constitute a mighty and ever-present proof of the accuracy of much that has been advanced in the foregoing pages on the subject of the life led—of the hopes and ideals cherished among the disciples of Jesus in that first stage of anxious trial and sore danger.

The pictures painted below in the chapters treating of the catacombs of Rome are admirable contemporary illustrations of what the writings of Aristides, Tertullian, and Lactantius tell us of the solemn duty to the dead which was insisted upon with such touching eloquence to the primitive congregations of the faithful.

V

THE SLAVE IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE

THERE was ever present in these early assemblies of Christians one class of persons who had no rank, no place in Roman society,—a class in which Cicero had declared that nothing great or noble could exist. Slavery has been well characterized as the "most frightful feature of the corruption of ancient Rome, and it extended through every class of the community." Economically, "the poor citizen found almost all the spheres in which an honourable livelihood might be obtained, wholly or at least in a very great part preoccupied by slaves." Morally, "the slave population was a hotbed of vice, and it contaminated all with which it came in contact." [1]

Now what position did the slave occupy in early Christian society? It is quite clear that the primitive Christians had no idea of abolishing slavery. It was part of the ancient society, and they accepted it even amongst themselves—apparently made no effort to abolish it; but the view they took of it in reality dealt a death-blow to the unhappy and miserable institution. It is true that whilst Christianity gradually modified its most painful and objectionable features by example and by precept, it was only after long, long years that it succeeded by a bloodless revolution to wipe away the awful curse —"The mills of God grind slowly."

But the New Testament simply directs slaves to be faithful and obedient. In the letter to Philemon, Paul never even hints at the release of the slave Onesimus, who was very dear to him.

In 1 Cor. vii. 20, Paul urges every man to abide in the calling (*i.e.* the state of life or condition) in which he was when he was called to God; and even advises the slave to be content

[1] Lecky, *European Morals*, chap. ii., "The Pagan Empire."

to remain a slave even if the opportunity to become free presents itself; for this is the interpretation which a chain of the best commentators gives to the words "use it rather." See, too, Eph. vi. 5–9; Tit. ii. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 18.[1]

The earliest Christian writings take the same view of the question of slavery as we find in the Epistles of Paul and Peter. So in the *Didaché* we read: "Thou shalt not give directions when thou art in anger to thy slave or thy handmaid, who trust in the same God, lest perchance they shall not fear the Lord who is over you both; for He cometh not to call men according to their outward position, but He cometh to those whom the Spirit hath made ready. And ye slaves, ye shall be subject to your masters as to God's image, in modesty and fear" (chap. iv.).

Aristides writes as follows: "But as for their servants or handmaids, or their children if any of them have any, they (the Christians) persuade them to become Christians, for the love that they have towards them; and when they have become so, they call them without distinction Brethren." —*Apol.*, chap. xv.

But although slavery as an institution[2] was left for the time virtually untouched, Christianity in its own circles worked an immediate and vast change in the condition of the slave: "It supplied a new order of relations, in which the relations of classes were unknown, and it imparted a new dignity to the servile classes."[3]

In the assemblies of the Christians of the first days on which we have been dwelling, the social difference between

[1] Slavery was not authoritatively condemned until the year of grace 1807. Lecky characterizes the action of Christian England here in the following eloquent words: "The unwearied, unostentatious, and inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous acts recorded in the history of nations" (*History of Morals*, chap. i.). And even after 1807 it lived on an acknowledged and recognized institute of several countries. The terrible war which led to the slave abolition in the United States is still unforgotten even by this generation.

[2] Ozanam estimates the numbers of slaves in the first and second centuries of our era as amounting to half the population of the Empire. The estimate is no doubt exaggerated, but the numbers of the slave population in that period were undoubtedly very great.

[3] Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii. chap. iv.

master and slave was quite unknown. They knelt side by side when they received the Holy Eucharist. They sat side by side as the instructions were given and the words of the Lord Jesus were expounded. Their prayers ascended together to the mercy-seat of the Eternal. While not unfrequently a slave was promoted to be the teacher; the highest offices in the congregation[1] were now and again filled by chosen members of the slave class. They suffered with their masters, and shared with them the glory of martyrdom.

The Acts of the Martyred Slaves were read to the congegations of the faithful, and the highest honour and veneration was paid to their memory. The slaves Blandina of Lyons, Felicitas of Carthage, Emerentiana of Rome the foster-sister of Agnes, the famous martyr — are names which deservedly rank high in the histories of the early heroines of the Church.

But although slavery was still recognized in the new Society which outwardly made no abrupt changes, which desired no sudden and violent uprooting in the old Society, a marvellous change passed over the ordinary conception of the slave.

An extract from a letter of Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus, the disciple and biographer of S. Martin of Tours (*circa* the last years of the fourth century), will give some idea of the regard so largely entertained by Christian thinkers for the slave members of the community. Thanking Sulpicius for a young slave he had sent him, Paulinus of Nola, recognizing in the slave an earnest and devout soul, writes to his friend as follows: "He has served me, and woe is me that I have allowed him to be my servant—that he who was no servant of sin, should yet be in the service of a sinner! Unworthy that I am, every day I suffered him to wash my feet; and there was no menial duty he would not have performed had I allowed him, so unsparing was he of his body—so watch-

[1] Hermas, the author of the famous *Shepherd*, belonged to the slave class. The Roman Bishop Pius, A.D. 142–157, was the brother of Hermas. The celebrated Bishop of Rome, Callistus, A.D. 218–222, had been a slave.

"The first and grandest edifice of Byzantine architecture in Italy—the Church of S. Vitale at Ravenna—was dedicated by Justinian to the memory of a martyred slave."—Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii. chap. iv.

ful for his soul. Ah, it is Jesus Christ that I venerate in this young man; for surely every faithful soul proceeds from God, and every humble man of heart comes from the very heart of Christ."[1]

There is little doubt but that this authoritative teaching of the Christian masters in the matter of the perfect equality of the slave in the eyes of God, and the consequent tender and often loving treatment meted out to the Christian members of the despised and downtrodden class, gravely misliked the more thoughtful among the pagan aristocracy of Rome, and that this teaching and practice of Christians in the case of the vast slave class in the pagan Empire ranked high among the dangers which they felt threatened the existence of the old state of things. Grave considerations of this kind must have strongly influenced the minds of men like Pius and Marcus and their entourage, before they determined to carry out their bitter policy of persecution.

The Romans of the old school could have well afforded to regard with comparative indifference the enfranchisement of any number of Christian slaves. Freedmen, especially in the imperial household, were very numerous in the days of the Antonines. But the teaching that these slaves—*while still slaves*—were their brethren, and ought to be treated with love and esteem, was a new and disturbing thought in the Empire of the great Antonines.

. . . . . .

Lecky, in his *History of European Morals* (chap. iv.), has a fine passage in which he sums up the great features of the new movement of Christian charity, and its results on the world at large. It runs as follows:

"There is no fact of which an historian becomes more steadily or more painfully conscious than the great difference between the importance and the dramatic interest of the subjects he treats. Wars or massacres, the horrors of martyrdom or the splendour of individual prowess, are susceptible of such brilliant colouring that with but very little literary skill they can be so portrayed that their importance is adequately realized, and that they appeal powerfully to the emotions of the

[1] S. Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.* xxiii.

reader. But this vast and unostentatious movement of charity, operating in the village hamlets and in the lonely hospital, staunching the widow's tears and following all the windings of the poor man's griefs, presents few features the imagination can grasp, and leaves no deep impression upon the mind. The greatest things are those which are most imperfectly realized; and surely no achievements of the Christian Church are more truly great than those which it has effected in the sphere of charity. For the first time in the history of the world it has inspired many thousands of men and women, at the sacrifice of all worldly interests, and often under circumstances of extreme discomfort or danger, to devote their entire lives to the single object of assuaging the sufferings of humanity. It has covered the globe with countless institutions of mercy, absolutely unknown to the whole pagan world. It has indissolubly united in the minds of men the idea of supreme goodness with that of active and constant benevolence."

The foundation stories of all this vast movement of charity and altruistic love were laid in the early years of Christianity.

The assemblies—the meetings together of the Christians of the first days—constructed and developed, as we have seen, the laws of charity; indicating the persons who were to be assisted, suggesting, too, the means and resources out of which the sufferers—the forlorn and needy—might be helped and comforted in life and in death.

All that happened subsequently—the mighty organizing work of great masters of charity, such as Basil of Cappadocian Cæsarea, and later of members of the monastic orders—was simply the development, the expansion, the application to individual needs of the primitive ordinances of the first days which we have been sketching out,—ordinances all founded upon the advice, the injunctions, the commands which we find in early Christian writings such as the *Didaché*, the 1*st Epistle* of Clement of Rome, the *Apology* of Aristides, the *Shepherd* of Hermas, the writings of Justin Martyr and Minucius Felix, and a very little later in the more elaborate works of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, and repeated in the first half of the third century

by eminent teachers such as Origen and Cyprian of Carthage; all primarily based more or less exactly upon the words of the Lord Jesus and of His own immediate disciples.

In the primitive assemblies of the Christian Brotherhood these things formed the groundwork of the instructions and exhortations of the teachers and preachers, and were united with the dogma of the Atonement, with the tidings of immortality, the promises of bliss and eternal peace in the life beyond the grave.

Entering into one of these early assemblies held in an upper chamber or courtyard of a wealthy Christian brother, or in one of those dark and gloomy chambers of the catacombs, "we step," as it has been well said, "into a whole world of sympathy and of love."

VI

DIFFICULTIES IN ORDINARY LIFE AMONG THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

BUT the rapt moments enjoyed by the men and women who met together in these primitive assemblies soon passed. The perfect realization of brotherhood, the sharing in the mystic Eucharist, the fervent prayers, the dwelling on the sunlit words of their Divine Master, the earnest and pressing injunctions to be generous in charity and almsgiving for the benefit of the forlorn and sick in their company, the feeling that the unseen presence of the Lord was all the while in their midst,—all these things contributed to the joy and gladness which permeated each little assembly; every one who assisted at one of these meetings could whisper in his or her heart the words of the "apostle" on the Mount of Transfiguration—"Lord, it is good for us to be here."

But when the gathering dispersed, a reaction must have quickly set in. From that atmosphere of sympathy, of love and hope, they passed at once into the cold, hard, busy world —into family life—into the workshop, the study, the barrack, and the Forum—all coloured with—permeated by that system of gross and actual idolatry which entered into every home, every trade and profession of the Roman Empire. What was to be their conduct? how were Christians to behave in a world wholly given up to an idolatry they knew was false, and utterly hateful to the Lord whose presence they had just left?

The difficulties of a believer's life in the early Christian centuries must have been terrible; and it must be borne in mind that these difficulties were not occasional, but of daily, almost of hourly occurrence. To enumerate a few:

1. *In the family*, in domestic life. Consider the position of a Christian slave—of a son or daughter—of a wife—in a pagan

family. What scenes of strain and estrangement if one member was a Christian and the household generally clung to the old Roman religion! The son or daughter might wish to be Christ's disciple, and yet shrink from "hating father and mother, brothers and sisters." What constant contests would the Christian have to endure—what bitter reproaches—what perpetual danger of giving way and so endangering the immortal soul! What share could the Christian member of a pagan family take in the ordinary business and pleasures of the every-day existence, to say nothing of the extreme peril to which a member of the sect would be constantly subject of being denounced as a Christian to the authorities, who were often too ready to listen to the informer?

2. *In Trade.* — Many commercial occupations were more or less closely connected with idol-worship; to say nothing of the makers and decorators of idol-images, a trade that manifestly was impossible for a Christian to be occupied in, there were hosts of artisans employed in the great arenas where the public games were held; then, too, there were the actors—the gladiators—those engaged in the schools and training-homes of these. What were such persons to do?

3. In the ordinary *pleasures of the people* in which such multitudes took the keenest delight, was the Christian to stand aloof from all these? Was the Christian to attract a painful and dangerous notoriety by refusing to share in such dearly loved amusements, which with rare exceptions were positively hateful to every Christian's conscience?

4. Was the civil servant or the lawyer to abandon his calling in which the worship of and reverence for the gods of Rome played so prominent a part? Was the soldier, or still more the officer of the Legions, to abandon his post and desert his colours, rather than acquiesce in the daily service and adoration of the gods of Rome. Was he to refuse to pay the customary homage to the awful Cæsar, when the slightest disrespect or failure in homage to this sovereign master, who claimed the rank of Deity, would be construed into treason and disloyalty?

5. *Education.*—Could a Christian still continue to be a

teacher of the young, seeing that in all the manuals of education a knowledge of the old gods still worshipped in Rome—their myths, their prowess, their various attributes—was carefully taught? The very festivals and sacred days had to be carefully observed by them, since it was by means of these the teachers' fees were reckoned.

All such and many other like questions had to be considered and weighed by the Christian converts living in the world of Rome. Very thorny and rough was the path which had to be travelled by every earnest Christian in his way through life.

. . . . . .

A striking and eloquent apologia for or explanation of the reasons which guided many of the early Christian teachers to advocate a certain feeling of toleration in various circumstances of everyday life may be quoted here:

"The (Roman) Empire was originally developed quite apart from Christianity under the shadow of the worship of the old false gods. Everything in it bore the stamp of idolatry. Its laws and its customs, first framed by patricians who were at once priests and lawgivers, then consolidated by Emperors who ranked first and foremost as sovereign pontiffs of the idol-worship, everything was coloured with and permeated by polytheism. Art—Letters—private customs—all were pagan. There was no public monument but was placed under the guardianship of some heathen deity. No poem was composed without special reference to an idol god; no feast began without a libation to an idol; no household omitted the inescapable duty which directed that a sacred fire should burn before the household gods (Lares). Thus absolutely independent of Christianity, such a civilization must needs be intensely hostile to the new faith, and its hostility never faltered one instant. Differing here from the fixed rule of universal toleration, Roman society from the very first displayed towards Christianity the bitterest contempt—insulting treatment—persecution. The religion of Jesus grew up and spread under circumstances of general ignominy and hatred . . . living in such a highly civilized community—mighty and indeed all-powerful—the Church of Christ destroyed

nothing, adopted everything, quietly correcting, gently changing and reforming everything, graving the Cross of its Founder on all the institutions of pagan Rome ; breathing its inspiration by degrees into all its laws and customs." [1]

[1] De Broglie, *Revue des deux mondes*, 1st Nov. 1852, reproduced in his *L'Église et l'Empire Romain*, vol. i., Avertissement, ii–iii.

VII

THE ASCETIC AND THE MORE PRACTICAL SCHOOLS OF TEACHING

THE members of the Christian Brotherhood were not left without guidance as to their behaviour in the world of Rome. There were *two schools* among the Christian teachers of authority in the primitive Church.

The one which we will term the school of "Rigourists" or "ascetics" found a brilliant and able exponent in the stern African Father, Tertullian, who taught and wrote in the latter years of the second and the earlier years of the third centuries. From the burning and impassioned words of this famous African teacher we can form a generally accurate idea of what was taught and pressed home in the school of "Rigourists."

No compromise was ever suggested by these hard, stern teachers—no "via media" was even hinted at.

The artisan must forsake his calling if it even was connected in the most remote degree with idol worship,[1] with the games loved of the people, with anything which appeared antagonistic to any of the Master's commands. These words must be understood in their strict literal sense, and must be obeyed.

The soldier must abandon his colours, the civil servant his profession. The slave must at all risks refuse his obedience when that obedience involved acquiescence in any form of idolatry. The Christian wife, the son or daughter in a pagan family, must gently but firmly decline to share even in the formal ancestral worship, or to be present at the public games of the arena, or the performances in the theatre. In their dress and ornaments, in their very language, in their hours of play and work, they must hold themselves aloof.

[1] See, for instance, Tert. *De Idolat.* viii., where the various trades connected with idols and temples are enumerated.

We may picture to ourslves how in many a pagan household, in the Forum, in the army and civil service, gentle, pitying men and women would be found who would shield and shelter these seemingly fanatical and earnest adherents of a despised religion; but in many cases there would be no loving, pitying ones who would strive to throw a kindly veil over what seemed to them such strange, such unpatriotic and even disloyal conduct. Then would assuredly follow arrest—imprisonment—exile—the deadly mines, where the condemned toiled in a hopeless, dreary captivity. Not unfrequently torture and death would be the guerdon of the devoted Christian under circumstances of awful pain and mortal agony.

It is out of this class that the martyrs mostly came. It was to embolden and encourage these that the little known "Schools of Martyrdom" were formed, where very earnest Christians were trained to endure all and suffer for the Name's sake.[1]

The ascetics, however, were in the minority. There was another school in the primitive Church, strict certainly in its instructions, but more ready to make allowances; less uncompromising in its views of the everyday Christian life; less literal in its interpretation of the Divine Master's words.

This gentler and more practical school is well represented in the works still preserved to us of several of the great teachers of early Christianity. A very conspicuous example of this school of teaching is the famous Dialogue put together by the North African Latin writer, Minucius Felix. The generally received date of the writing is *circa* A.D. 160, in the reign of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus. It is a work of peculiar charm. One scholar terms it "a golden Book"; another (Renan) styles it "the pearl of Apologetic literature."

It is cast in the form of a dialogue held by three persons on the then beautiful seashore of Ostia. The speakers are real historic characters of some rank and position in the Roman world in the middle years of the second century. The arguments adduced by the pagan Cæcilius are supposed to be a reproduction of a lost work of Fronto, the tutor and friend of the Emperor Marcus. The refutation of Octavius the wealthy Christian merchant, which follows and which con-

[1] On these "Schools of Martyrdom," see below, p. 198 foll.

vinced Cæcilius of the truth of the new faith, is the principal piece in the work and the part to which reference is specially made here, and it admirably voices many of the views of the second and gentler school of early Christianity. The criticism of Renan on the view of Christianity taken by Octavius is striking, and fairly accurate. It is, he says, "the conception of the new religion of amiable advocates wishful to enrol in the Christian ranks, men of culture and position. Such men as the Octavius of the Dialogue would never have written the Gospels or the Apocalypse; but, on the other hand, without such liberal interpreters, the Gospels, the Apocalypse, and the Epistles of Paul would have never penetrated beyond the circle of a narrow sect, and in the long run the sect of Christians would have disappeared." "Minucius Felix," the great French writer, goes on to say, "represented in those early years the preacher of Nôtre Dâme (in Paris) in our own time, addressing men of the world."[1]

Christianity, in the eloquent presentment of Octavius, by no means requires the believer to put aside the philosophers and pagan writers whose works he admired. In the argument of Octavius, Christian teaching lives in the pages of Aristotle and Plato. He points out with rare skill and ingenuity that the new religion makes no claim on men to give up their callings and professions; for instance, advocates like Minucius, the author of "the Dialogue," never dream, save in times of vacation, of leaving the Forum the scene of their life-work. Christians, like other men, busy themselves with the same occupations; so society may surely accept them without any scruples. The cultivation of Art—the study of Letters—are by no means incompatible with the profession of Christianity. The religion of Jesus uses all these things, and using them sanctifies them.

Eminent teachers, such as Clement of Alexandria at the close of the second century in his *Pædagogus*, give directions to believers to enable them to live a Christian life in the world. Origen, in many respects a "Rigourist," is far from emulating Tertullian in his stern denunciations and warnings; and even such men as the saintly Cyprian, who closed his beautiful life by a voluntary martyrdom, shows

[1] See Renan, *Marc-Aurèle*, chap. xxii.

by his own example that there were even times and seasons when a Christian by flight might rightly avoid arrest and suffering for the Name's sake.

In this gentler, more acommodating school it was clear that heathen art was not forbidden. The decoration of even the earlier sepulchral chambers in the Roman catacombs plainly indicates this freedom.

That this policy of the gentler school of early teaching, which countenanced, perhaps suggested, many allowances, especially in matters of purely ceremonial idolatry, was adopted by the majority of believers, is clear from the numbers of Christians who we know lived in the imperial court, served in the army, and occupied positions in the civil service.

For instance, in the imperial court, in the days of S. Paul, we meet with salutations from Christians in Cæsar's household (Phil. iv. 22).

The well-known "graffito" on the Palatine, of the caricature of a crucifix, is an indication that there were Christians among the imperial pages in the reign of Marcus,[1] A.D. 161–80.

Irenæus (iv. 30) in the last quarter of the second century expressly writes as follows: "And what of those who in the royal palace are believers?"

Marcia, the favourite of Commodus, if not a Christian, was more than kind to the Christian sect; that many Christians were in her circle is certain. Even Tertullian testifies (*Apol.* xxxvi.) to the fact that there were Christians in the palace of the Emperor Septimius Severus, A.D. 193–212.

In the court of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222–35) were many Christians; and it has been supposed, not without some reason, that the Emperor himself was secretly a believer.

Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria (quoted in Euseb. *H. E.* vii. 10), writing of the favourable disposition of the Emperor Valerian towards Christians in the earlier part of his reign, A.D. 253, says: "All his house (court) was filled with pious persons; it was indeed a congregation of the Lord."

In the first part of Diocletian's reign, A.D. 284–96, the court of Nicomedia was in great measure composed of Chris-

[1] Some put this graffito a little later, perhaps in the days of Alexander Severus, A.D. 222–35.

tians; the wife and daughter of the Emperor were believers.

From this chain of references to the presence of Christians in the imperial court from the days of S. Paul to the latter years of the third century, we are compelled to conclude that large allowances on the part of the Emperor were not unfrequently made to the sect, and even that not a few concessions outwardly to take part in the ceremonies of official paganism must have been allowed to the Christian courtier all through the period when Christianity was an unlawful and forbidden religion.

In the army a similar spirit of mutual allowance and concession must have been often shown. It is clear that from the very first there were not a few Christian soldiers in the Legions. There must have been many cases in which the superior officers connived at the scruples of Christian soldiers; while, on the other hand, the Christian Legionary must have consented generally to share in the more public and official ceremonies in which the old worship of the gods was inextricably mixed up. Nowhere were the difficulties, however, for believers more acute than in the army, and the slightest ill-will or pagan bigotry on the part of the superior officer made the position of a Christian soldier absolutely untenable even when the soldier belonged to what we have termed the gentler and more accommodating school of Christian teaching. Martyrs in the army, it has been noticed, were relatively more numerous than in the civil callings.[1]

The civil service contained undoubtedly many Christians in the early centuries of the era; see Aristides (*Apol.* xv.), who, writing of Christians, says: "Where they are judges they judge righteously." Tertullian refers to the presence of Christians

[1] The well-known recital of the martyrdom of S. Maurice and of the Theban Legion, whether it be accepted as absolutely genuine or not, is an admirable instance of the ever-present dangers and difficulties of a Christian soldier of the Empire. The scene of the terrible and wholesale martyrdom was Agaunum (S. Maurice), some nine miles distant from Octodurus (Martigny) in the Canton of Valais, and the date was *circa* A.D. 292–6. Maximian was then reigning as colleague of Diocletian. The authenticity of the story is maintained by Ruinart, who includes it in his *Acta Sincera*; by Tillemont, and in our days by Allard, who, however, cuts down the Legion to a cohort. Harnack, on the other hand, and others doubt its authenticity.

in all ranks, and states how "they could be found in the palace, in the Senate, and in the Forum" (*Ad. Nat.* i. 1 and *Apol.* i.). Cyprian, *Ep.* lxxx. 1, and other early authorities could be quoted here. Eus. *H. E.* viii. 1, specially mentions how provinces were occasionally ruled by Christian governors, and calls attention to a Phrygian city whose whole population including officials were Christians. He was writing of the last years of the third century. Such Christian officials must have had great allowances made to them, and they must have often availed themselves of the licence permitted to believers on the occasion of purely State ceremonials, which were literally permeated with references to the old State religion.

Instances and examples from the Old Testament books were adduced by the teachers of the gentler school of Christian life in support of the allowances made to believers to retain their court appointments and civil service offices, and to carry on their professions in spite of the idolatrous associations connected with these offices and callings.

Great saints such as Daniel—revered patriarchs such as Joseph—had been ministers of mighty idol-worshipping sovereigns, and must have been present at and given a certain countenance to official pagan ceremonies. Naaman, the eminent servant of the King of Syria, after he had accepted the worship of the God of Israel, even asked the great prophet Elisha permission to accompany his royal master into the temple of the god Rimmon, and to pay obeisance to the Syrian idol on State occasions; and asked that he might be forgiven for this apparent act of idolatry. In reply, Elisha simply bade him "go in peace" (2 Kings v. 18–19).

But in spite of these kindly allowances, these gentler rules and directions, the condition of Christians, even for those, and they certainly were in the majority, who followed the teaching of the more kindly and lenient school, was very hard and difficult. In the family life—in public life, the searchings of heart of a true believer must have been often very acute and distressing, and their position most precarious; and in those times when a wave of pagan fanaticism swept over the imperial court, the province, or the city, no maxims of earthly prudence and caution, however carefully followed

out, would have been able to save them from prosecution; and prosecution was invariably followed by the breaking up of their homes, by rigorous imprisonment, confiscation of their property, loss of rank and position, too often by torture and death.

To turn once more to the sterner and smaller school of "Rigourists," for these, after all, were "les âmes d'élite" of the Christians in the first three centuries; in later times such men and women possibly were termed fanatics, they have been often branded as wild and unpractical persons; but it was to these heroic souls after all that in great measure Christianity owed its final victory.

The wonderful and rapid spread of Christianity noticeable after the Milan toleration Edict of Constantine, A.D. 313, has often been commented upon with surprise. From being a persecuted and despised cult, Christianity became, long before the fourth century had run its course, *the religion* of the Empire; it had previously gained evidently the hearts of the people in well-nigh all the provinces of the mighty Empire.

Now no imperial edicts—no mere favour and patronage of the Emperor and his court, could ever have won for Christianity that widespread and general acceptance among the people so noticeable within fifty years of the Milan proclamation of Constantine.[1] *Something* more was needed. For a little over two hundred years the Christians had been sowing the seeds of a new and nobler view of life—"it had gradually taught the supreme sanctity of love—it had presented an ideal destined for centuries to draw around it all that was greatest as well as all that was noblest on earth; and one great cause of its success was that it produced more heroic actions and formed more upright men than any other creed. . . . Noble lives crowned by heroic deaths were the best arguments of the infant Church."[2]

[1] The edicts favourable to Christianity were quietly received, even approved, in many places warmly welcomed; and vast and ever increasing numbers of the population, hitherto pagans, joined the Christian communities.

The enormous and seemingly sudden increase in the number of Christians in the Roman Empire in the latter years of the third and in the fourth centuries, is a problem which even now is something of a mystery to some historians.

[2] See Lecky, *Hist. of Morals*, chap. iii.

There is no doubt but that a deep impression had been gradually made upon the masses (*i.e.* the people generally of the Empire) by the undaunted behaviour under suffering, of the confessors in the two centuries which followed the death of Peter and Paul; and this impression was deepened by the events connected with the last terrible persecution of Diocletian. The extent of this last onslaught, the awful severity of its edicts, the fearful thoroughness with which these edicts were carried out, the numbers, the constancy and brave patience of the confessors, went home to the hearts of the indifferent; it affected even the enemies of the Church, and brought about a complete revulsion of feeling towards the once hated and despised sect.

And it must be remembered that the examples of the marvellous endurance of suffering, the constancy, the brave patience, the heroic deaths, were drawn in a vast majority of conspicuous cases from the school of Rigourists, from that company of men and women of intense, perhaps of exaggerated earnestness, who listened to and obeyed the burning words of a Tertullian or an Hippolytus, rather than to the gentler counsels of a Minucius Felix and the teachers who pointed out to Christians a way of living in the world which only rarely required such tremendous sacrifices as home and family, career and profession, even life itself—things very dear to men.

Surely no just historian would dare to speak slightingly of these splendid lives of utter sacrifice of self, when he reflects on the power which such lives have exercised over their fellow-men. The debt which Christianity owes to this stern school of Rigourists is simply measureless.

In the last half of the third century there arose a Christian poet—the first great song-man who had appeared since the famous singers of the Augustan age had passed away. The popularity of Prudentius has been enduring; for centuries in many lands his striking and original poems have been read and re-read. Among his poems the most eagerly sought after have been the hymns descriptive of and in praise of the martyrs for the "Name's" sake. These loved poems are known as "*Peri-Stephanôn*"—the Book of the (Martyrs') Crowns.

It is the halo of glory surrounding these martyrs or confessors that especially strikes the historian. We see in these popular poems what a profound, what a lasting impression the sufferings of the martyrs had made on the peoples of the Roman Empire. The saint-sufferers, men or women, became soon an object of something more than reverence.

The heroic personages of Prudentius belong to no one land, to no solitary nationality. Nowhere was the truth of the well-known saying that " the blood of the martyr was the seed of the Church " more conspicuously exemplified than in the songs of Prudentius. It has been remarked with great force and truth that in the burning lilts of this great Spanish poet of the later years of the fourth century, we must perforce recognize something more than the inspiration of a solitary individual. We seem to hear in his impassioned words the echoes of the voice of the people.[1]

[1] Prudentius does not stand alone as voicing the opinions of the people. A contemporary of his—Paulinus of Nola—although far behind Prudentius in genius, was a poet of considerable power. This Paulinus, a person of high dignity and of great wealth, when still comparatively young, withdrew from the world and devoted himself to religion ; he has left behind him a collection of poems, which he wrote annually on the occasion of the Festival of S. Felix, a martyr in whose honour he erected a basilica. His poems, of which some 5000 lines have been preserved, contain many vivid pictures illustrative of the popular aspect of Christianity in the latter years of the fourth century. He loves to dwell on the intense devotion of the people to the memory of the martyr whom he loved, S. Felix of Nola, and tells us of the crowds of pilgrims visiting his shrine.

Damasus, bishop of Rome, A.D. 366–84, whose many and elaborate works of restoration of the Roman catacombs are dwelt on in the section of this work treating of the great City of the Dead, beneath the suburbs of Rome, bears a similar testimony to the widespread devotion of the people to the memory of the martyrs of the days of persecution. His elaborate works in the catacombs were all designed for the convenience of the vast crowds of pilgrims, in the second half of the fourth century, from many lands to the shrines where the remains of the more famous martyrs had been deposited.

VIII

WHAT THE RELIGION OF JESUS OFFERED IN RETURN FOR THE HARDSHIPS CHRISTIANS HAD TO ENDURE IN THE EARLY CENTURIES

SUCH was the life of a Christian for nearly two hundred and fifty years after the deaths of Peter and Paul at Rome.

For *all*, as we have urged, even for the majority who were disciples of the gentler, less exacting school of teaching, but who generally accepted the yoke and burden of Christ, the life must have been very hard and difficult, at times even full of danger; while for *some*, *i.e.*, for the disciples of the school of "Rigourists," so hard—so austere—so full of nameless perils, that men now can scarcely credit that any could really have lived so difficult, so painful a life—could have listened to and striven in real earnest to obey such rules as the great Rigourist master, Tertullian, laid down for the faithful; as, for instance:

"Fast—because rigid fasting is a preparation for martyrdom; tortures will have no material to work on; your dry skins will better resist the iron claws; your blood, already exhausted, will flow less freely."[1]

"Women, shun the marriage bond. To what purpose will you bear children, seeing you are longing to be taken out of this sinful world, and you are desirous to send your children before you[2] (to glory)."

"Ye women (take heed how you adorn yourselves), for I know not how the wrist that is accustomed to the (gemmed) bracelet will endure the roughness of the chain. I know not how the leg that has rejoiced in the golden anklet will endure the harsh restraint of the iron fetters. I fear the neck hung round with a chain of pearls and emeralds will

[1] Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 12. [2] Tertullian, *To his Wife*, 5.

leave scanty room for the sword of the executioner." "Dear sisters, let us meditate on hardships, then when they come to us we shall not feel them; let us give up luxuries and we shall not regret them; for Christians now, remember, pass their time not in gold, but in iron. At this moment are the angels weaving for you robes of martyrdom."[1]

. . . . . .

But in return for all this, Christianity offered much—in truth, a splendid guerdon for the life of sacrifice. In the first place, the Christian was delivered from the dread spectre which constantly haunted the life of the pagan—*the fear of death.* Throughout life, sleeping and waking, to the pagan of all ranks and orders, death was an enemy. What the men of the pagan Empire in the early Christian centuries felt in respect of the great universal foe—what they thought of it—is well shown in the epitaphs on the pagan tombs of the first, second, and third centuries.[2]

Complete freedom from this ever-present dread was the immediate reward received by the believer: so far was death from being an enemy, that to the Christian it appeared as the best and most longed for friend. Again and again the Church was compelled to restrain rather than to encourage candidates for martyrdom. From Paul, who wrote how "he desired to depart and be with Christ, which was far better" (Phil. i. 23); from Ignatius, whose passionate desire for a martyr's death appears and reappears, in his Letter to the Romans, in such words as "it is good for me to die for Jesus Christ, rather than to reign over the farthest bounds of the earth"; "Suffer me to receive the pure light when I come thither, then I shall be a man indeed"; "Let me be an imitator of the passion of my God" (*To the Romans,* vi.); from the thousand epitaphs in the catacomb tombs, which we can still read, we gather this knowledge—the absolute freedom of the Christian from that fear of death which weighed so heavily upon all pagan society.

The very expressions used by the disciples of the first

[1] Tertullian, *On Female Dress,* xi. 13.

[2] Examples of these are given below; see p. 313 of this work.

centuries when speaking of the dread enemy,[1] bear curious witness to the new relation of the believer to the ancient foe of man; they spoke of death as "a passage into life"—as "a sleep." The spot where the dead were laid was now termed "a cemetery"—"a place of sleeping"; burial was called "depositio"—the body laid up as it were in trust.

Cyprian the saintly, the martyr Bishop of Carthage, well voices the feelings of Christians in the matter of death the friend:[2] "Let us think what we mean when we speak of the presence of Christ (after death), of the increasing hosts of our friends, the loved, the reverenced, the sainted who are there. Cyprian cannot even mourn the departed—he only misses them as friends gone on a long journey. He is unable to bear the putting on black garments of mourning, in memory of those who wear the fadeless white. "Put the terror of death quite away—think only of the deathlessness beyond." "Let us greet the day which gives to each of us his own country . . . which restores us to paradise. Who that has lived in foreign lands would not hasten to go back to his own country? . . . We look on paradise as our country."

The wondrous joy which came to the Christian in the assemblies we have been picturing—the fact of the new Brotherhood—the feeling of the presence of the Master in their midst, watching over them—has been already dwelt upon at some length.

The blessed consciousness of *the forgiveness of all sin*, the knowledge that in repentance and in prayer they could ever wash anew their scarred robes white in the blood of the Lamb, was a source of perpetual and ever-recurring joy to the earnest Christian. The doctrine of the atonement ever would give them constant comfort and confidence in all the difficulties and dangers of common everyday life—"Though their sins were as scarlet they would become white as snow," was an ancient Hebrew saying of Isaiah. It was one of the precious treasures inherited by the Christian from the Jewish Church. And in the sorely harassed and tempted life of the world of

[1] Some of the more remarkable of these are quoted in Book IV. pt. iii. (pp. 309-312).

[2] On "the Mortality," *i.e.* the plague of Alexandria, 20-24.

Rome the words would be often repeated by the believers, with the new striking Christian addition—" when washed in the blood of the Lamb," and the memory of the beautiful saying would ever supply fresh courage for the conflict.

. . . . . .

Perhaps the most powerful and sustaining of all the Christian beliefs, the one that never for an instant was absent from their thoughts, was the *hope*—aye, more than hope, the certainty that bliss indescribable awaited the soul of the happy redeemed *the moment* it quitted the body—" To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise "—a wonderful promise, indeed, of the Redeemer, which must have brought ineffable sweetness and repose into thousands of storm-tossed hearts, —a promise which must have made up for many a hard and painful struggle. The life so hard and difficult—so full of dangers and perplexities—would soon come to an end, and then *at once* the beatific vision would be their guerdon, and rest and peace and joy would be the portion of the redeemed souls for ever.

Our picture of the inner life of the Christian in the early Christian centuries would be incomplete were we not to allude to the influence, perhaps scarcely recognised but ever at work, of portions of the " Revelation " of S. John. Holding, of course, in the teaching of the Christian masters a very different position to the Gospels, which, of course, formed the authoritative basis of all Christian instruction, the " Revelation " occupied a peculiar and singularly influential place in the thoughts of the early harassed believers.

Many of the more mystical and obscure sections of that wonderful composition which was very generally accepted as the work of the beloved apostle, we may assume were little dwelt upon either in public teaching or in private meditation ; the mystic prophecies of the seer were, comparatively speaking, but little read, and received then as now different interpretations ; but interspersed with these prophecies, and not necessarily connected with them, occur passages of surpassing beauty, in which pictures of the heaven-life are painted by no mortal hand. It was these which arrested the imagination, and found a home in many a Christian heart. The passages which

contained these pictures were no doubt repeated again and again by lonely harassed men and women in the silent watches of the night, in the public worship, in the study chamber, especially in the hour of danger and trial.

The *hope* of a glorious eternity was vividly painted in several remarkable passages of S. John's great Vision of Heaven and the future things. The disciples of the sterner school, who were trained so to speak for martyrdom, felt themselves specially addressed when the Seer told his vision of the thrones and of those who sat on them,—they would occupy the place of the souls of those who had been slain for the witness of Jesus (Rev. xx. 4); and again they would call to mind that when the Seer asked who were these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? he was told that these were they which came out of great tribulation, and who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and that therefore were they before the throne of God, and that from their eyes God would wipe away all tears (Rev. vii. 13–17).

To the disciples of the gentler school, too, words of immortal hope were spoken often in the same Book which spoke as no writing of earth had ever spoken before of the heaven-life. The Seer heard as it were the voice of *a great multitude*, and said how blessed they were which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; and the same Seer heard how there should be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; and again repeated the glorious promise that His servants (*all* His servants) should see His face, and that they should reign for ever and ever (Rev. xix. 6, 9, xxi. 4, xxii. 4, 5).

Moreover, they read and pondered over that most beautiful, most exhaustive promise made to *all* His faithful servants,—not only to the martyr band,—"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city (of God)." (Rev. xxii. 14, REVISED VERSION).

These and many other like sunlit sayings of the Book of Life in the Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation of S. John were ever ringing in the ears of the Christians of the first days, and telling them of the *immortal hope* which was their blessed

treasure,—words which sweetened their hard and too frequently painful lot, which made them feel that they had made a good exchange when they gave up the fleeting and often sinful pleasures of earth for the sure hope of the immortal joys of heaven. They felt how poor and tawdry after all were the things they had renounced in comparison with what awaited them when the short and weary period of human life came to an end.

In spite of what the believers renounced for the Name's sake, notwithstanding the many daily trials and dangers to which they were ever exposed, they were strangely happy with a new happiness quite unknown in the old pagan world, with a joy no man could take from them. Pagan society, whenever it deigned to notice them, treated them with a contemptuous pity, which too often shaded into positive hatred. We see this in the "Acts" of the Martyrs from the questions put to them by the Roman officials when they were brought before the tribunals, simply because they were Christians. This was the estimate of the sect entertained by men like the great Antonine Emperors, Pius and Marcus. The summary of Fronto the famous rhetorician, Marcus' tutor and friend, reproduced in the discourse of Cæcilius in the Dialogue of Minucius Felix, repeats too clearly the same disparaging view coloured with contempt and scarcely veiled hatred.

Nowhere is the pagan conception of the misery and wretchedness of the Christian life more clearly expressed than in the picturesque and graphic poem of Rutilius Namatianus,[1] a contemporary of Paulinus of Nola in the first years of the fifth century.

It is a comparatively late pagan criticism of Christianity, but it admirably expresses the common view of pagan society, and exactly coincides with the opinion of such eminent Romans as Marcus and his friend Fronto in the second century.

[1] This Rutilius was a Gallic gentleman of high position who had filled important offices at Rome, and had become a Senator. His undisguised opinion of the Christian sect appears in a graceful poem descriptive of a sea-trip from Rome (Ostia probably) to South Gaul. The work in question was composed *circa* A.D. 416.

"Is there any sense," writes Rutilius, "in living a wretched life for fear of becoming unhappy? these Christians love to torture themselves: they are more cruel even than the offended gods. I ask the question, has not the sect the secret of poisons more deadly than any possessed by Circe; for Circe only brought about a danger in the body, but these people change the very soul?"

The life of a Christian in the first two hundred and fifty years of the era was, however, as we have shown, emphatically no sad and mournful, no wretched existence. It was a life unspeakably bright and happy, undreamed of by any poet or philosopher in the many-sided story of paganism.

BOOK III

THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHURCH

PART I

FROM THE DATE OF THE GREAT FIRE OF ROME IN THE REIGN OF NERO TO THE DEATH OF MARCUS ANTONINUS

A.D. 64–A.D. 180

Introductory

THERE is really no doubt but that in the period of which we are writing in this Third Book, roughly stretching over some hundred and sixteen years, with very short intervals of comparative stillness, the Christian sect constantly lived under the veiled shadow of persecution; the penalties exacted for the confession of the Name were very severe—the confessors were ever exposed to confiscation of their goods, to harsh imprisonment, to torture, and to death.

This state of things, which existed in the Church in Rome and in all the communities of Christians, is disclosed to us not merely or even principally in the Acts of Martyrs, which for this very early period are comparatively few in number, and, with a few notable exceptions, of questionable authority, but largely from the fragments of contemporary Christian writings of undoubted authenticity which have come down to us.[1]

These fragments, for several of these writings are but fragments, represent a somewhat considerable literature, and they may be looked upon as descriptive of much of the life led by Christians during these hundred and sixteen years,[2] the

[1] The testimony of the Roman catacombs here is also very weighty. See Book III. part iii., where the numbers of martyrs and confessors buried in the catacombs are especially dwelt on.

[2] In this Third Book, where the question of the persecutions to which

period when the religion of Jesus was gradually but rapidly taking root in the world of Rome. With one notable exception the writings to which we refer issued from the heart of the New Sect.

We shall give a chain of some of the more striking passages from the fragments of the works in question, the passages which especially bear upon the ceaseless persecution which the Christians had to endure during that period we are dwelling upon in this section—which ended with the death of Marcus and the accession of his son Commodus in A.D. 180.

The quotations will be divided into two groups: the first from writings of apostles and apostolic men; that is, of men who had seen and conversed with the apostles themselves. The dates of this first group of witnesses range from the days of Nero to the days of Trajan, roughly from A.D. 64 to A.D. 107–10. The second group will include writings dating from the days of Trajan to the accession of Commodus, A.D. 180: the approximate dates of each writing and a very brief account of the several authors will be given.

It will be seen that the allusions to a state of persecution grow more numerous, more detailed and emphatic after A.D. 134–5, the date of the close of the last terrible Jewish war in the latter years of the Emperor Hadrian, when the line of separation between the Jew and the Christian became definitely marked, and the position and attitude of the Christians was no longer merely contemptuously viewed, but was misliked and even feared by the State authorities, who then (after

the early Christian Church was subjected is discussed, the period especially alluded to stretches from *circa* A.D. 64 to A.D. 180, including the reigns of the Flavian Emperors, of Hadrian and the Antonines.

But the conditions under which the Christians in the Roman Empire lived during the century and a quarter which followed the period above referred to, in very many respects differed but little from those that prevailed in the earlier years—only in the later period there were more years of comparative immunity from active persecution, while, on the other hand, when the comparatively "still" years came to an end, the cruelties inflicted upon the Christians were more marked, and the severity of the punishments meted out by the dominant pagan party in the State were greater and more far-reaching than in the earlier days—notably in the reigns of Maximin, Decius and Diocletian.

A.D. 135) for the first time clearly saw what a great and powerful society had grown up in the heart of the Empire.

. . . . . .

What a weighty group of words are those we are about to quote! They were written by men who lived in the heart of that little Society who with a love stronger than death loved Jesus of Nazareth as their friend and their God. They are words which are embedded in their letters—their devotional works—their histories—their pleading treatises and apologies for the faith, the faith which they esteemed of greater price than life.

Intensely real, they tell us of the life they and theirs were leading: reading them we seem to breathe the air they breathed; the simple unvarnished story tells us what daily, hourly perils were theirs,—what awful trials, what unspeakable dangers ever surrounded them; they show how hard it was to be a Christian in those early days in the first hundred years which followed the "passing" of S. John.

Nothing we can say now—write now—can give us a picture, a living picture, of the life of these first generations of believers in the Name, as do these words gathered from the fragments of contemporary writings which have come down to us across the long ages of storm and stress and change.

In the first group we will briefly examine the following:—The Epistle to the Hebrews, *circa* A.D. 65–6; the First Epistle of S. Peter, *circa* A.D. 65–7; the Apocalypse of S. John (the Revelation), *circa* A.D. 90; the *1st Epistle* of S. Clement of Rome, *circa* A.D. 95. To this little selection we would add The *Seven Epistles* of S. Ignatius, A.D. 107–10, now generally received as undoubtedly genuine.

I

FIRST GROUP OF QUOTATIONS

Epistle to the Hebrews, *circa* A.D. 65–6

THE first three of the above-mentioned writings possess a peculiar authority; they have been from very early times recognized as forming part of the Canon of New Testament Scriptures: of these three the Epistle to the Hebrews is generally believed to have been composed about A.D. 65–6. The congregations addressed in it had evidently been exposed to grave afflictions, and are told that a more awful trial awaits them in no distant future. For this bitter persecution they must prepare themselves.

A number of examples of noble and heroic resistances to trial and temptation are cited (Heb. xi. 32–40, xii. 1–4); the writer of the Epistle evidently expected that similar experiences will be the lot of the congregation he was addressing.

First Epistle of S. Peter, *circa* A.D. 65–7

The second writing, which will be examined at rather greater length, is of the utmost importance as a witness to the view of the perpetual persecution to which after A.D. 64 the sect was exposed. The First Epistle of S. Peter[1] was put out *circa* 65–7. It was written manifestly in a time of persecution; the keynote of the Epistle is consolation and encouragement

[1] This early and usually accepted date, *circa* 65–7, seems the more probably correct. It is the traditional date, and generally fits in with the life and work of S. Peter as given in the ancient authorities. Prof. Ramsay, however, *The Church in the Empire*, puts it some fourteen or fifteen years later, and concludes that the Apostle's martyrdom took place after A.D. 80. If, however, this later date be adopted, the references to the continual persecution would be even *more* striking than if the earlier and traditional date be accepted.

for the distant congregations addressed. The persecution was evidently raging in Rome, whence the letter was written, but it was rapidly spreading also in the provinces of the Empire. The language used shows it was no isolated capricious onslaught, but a systematic and legalized attack on the religion of Jesus. To quote a few passages :

" Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness by reason of manifold temptations : that the trial of your faith, being more precious than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ " (i. 6, 7).

" If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye ; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. . . . It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing " (iii. 14–17).

" Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you " (iv. 12).

" If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. . . . If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf " (iv. 14–16).

" Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world " (v. 9).

Revelation of S. John, *circa* A.D. 90

The Apocalypse of S. John is now generally dated *circa* A.D. 90 ; the *keynote* of this strange and in many parts beautiful writing—so unlike, save in certain sections, the other acknowledged books of the New Testament Canon—is *the suffering of the Church* : just a quarter of a century had elapsed since Nero and his advisers resolved upon the persecution of the congregations of the believers in Jesus.

No one can read this striking " Revelation " of S. John, with its wonderful visions, its exhortations, its words of warning, its messages of encouragement and comfort, without being keenly sensible that the Church therein portrayed

had been exposed—was then exposed to a bitter, relentless persecution; that the sufferers were witnesses to the Name; and that their sufferings were not owing to any deeds of wrong or treason to the State, but purely *because of the Name which they confessed.* They had been condemned simply because they were Christians.

It is true that comparatively little is said directly about these persecutions. Other subjects clearly are far more important to the writer; but a number of incidental allusions to the sufferings endured in the course of persecution occur—allusions which cannot be mistaken.

We will quote a few of these. Many of them imply that the Church was exposed to a long continued harrying to the death:

"I saw under the altar the souls of those that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (vi. 9–11).

"These are they that came out of great tribulation . . . therefore are they before the throne of God" (vii. 14–17).

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (xii. 11).

"They have shed the blood of saints and prophets" (xvi. 6).

"And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (xx. 4).

The victims of these persecutions, we are markedly told, are witnesses to the "Name" or the "Faith": so in the letter to the Church in Pergamos we read:

"Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My Faith" (ii. 13).

"And I saw the woman[1] drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (xvii. 6).

The persecution had been of long standing:

"I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast My name . . . even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you" (ii. 13).

And the persecution is to continue:

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (ii. 10).

Specially interesting from an historical point of view in this connexion of the testimony of the "Apocalypse" of S. John with the sleepless persecution to which the sect was subjected, is Professor Ramsay's exegesis of the words, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the beast) whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb" (xiii. 8), and "as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (xiii. 15).

"It is here implied that the persecutor is worshipped as a God by all people[2] except the Christians, and that the martyrs are slain because they do not worship 'the beast'—*i.e.* the Roman Emperor. Hence their refusal to worship 'the beast' and their witness to their own God, are united in one act; and this implies that the worship of 'the beast' (the Emperor) formed a test, the refusal of which was equivalent to a confession and witness. . . .

"The importance attached during this persecution to the worship of the Emperor, and the hatred of this special form of idolatry as the special enemy, have dictated the phrase addressed to the Church of Pergamos, 'Thou dwellest where

[1] The reference here is to pagan Rome, as "the woman drunken with blood"; so Mommsen quoted by Ramsay, who dwells on the fact that the death of the saints springs directly from their acknowledgment of their religion, and *not* for conviction for specific crimes.

[2] "The mind of the writer is practically restricted to the Roman world. . . . He thinks like a Roman that 'genus humanum' is the Roman world. The nations which did not worship the Roman Emperor were never present to his mind" (Ramsay, *The Church in the Empire*).

the throne of Satan, *i.e.* the temple of Rome and Augustus, is'" (ii. 13).

The peculiar partiality of the Emperor Domitian for this especial form of idolatry, in which he personally was adored as a god, has been already alluded to.

S. Clement of Rome, First Epistle, *circa* A.D. 95–6

About the year of grace 95–6, Clement, bishop of Rome, wrote his letter to the Christian congregation of Corinth—generally known as his *1st Epistle*. From the days of Irenæus downwards this letter has ever been considered a work of the highest importance, and its genuineness as a writing of Clement of Rome has never been disputed. Its importance consists in its record of the traditional interpretation of the apostolic teaching which was held in the great congregation of the metropolis from the first days. The immediate reasons of the Bishop of Rome writing to the Church of Corinth were the disastrous internal dissensions which were harassing the Corinthian congregation, disputes which not only marred its influence at home, but were productive of grave scandal abroad, and which, unless checked, would seriously affect the work of the Church in cities far distant from Corinth.

It was a gentle loving letter of remonstrance; but its value to the Church at large in all times consists in its being an authoritative declaration of the doctrine taught in the great Church in Rome in the closing years of the first century, somewhat more than a quarter of a century after the deaths of SS. Peter and Paul.

Clement in his Epistle to the Church of Corinth had no intention of writing a history of his Church. The object of his writing was a very different one. There are, however, a few notices scattered here and there in the course of his long letter, which bear upon the subject now under discussion, *i.e.*, the continuous nature of the persecution under which the Christian folk lived from the year 64 onward.

Clement begins by explaining the reason of his delay in taking up the questions which vexed the Corinthian congregation. "By reason of the sudden and repeated calamities

which are befalling us, we consider, brethren, we have been somewhat tardy in giving heed to the matters of dispute that have arisen among you, dearly beloved" (*1 Ep.* 1).

The next allusion is a very striking one. "But to pass from the examples of ancient days" (Clement had been quoting from the Old Testament), "let as come to those champions who lived very near to our time. Let us set before us the examples which belong to our generation . . . the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church were persecuted and contended even unto death. There was Peter who . . . endured not one nor two but many labours, and then having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory. . . . Paul by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance . . . he departed from the world, and went unto the holy place. . . . Unto these men of holy lives was gathered a vast multitude, who through many indignities and tortures . . . set a brave example among ourselves.

"These things, dearly beloved, we write not only as admonishing you, but also as putting ourselves in remembrance; for we are in the same lists, and the same contest awaiteth us" (*1 Ep.* 5–7).

Clement's words here, which occur in the middle of his argument, indisputably imply that after the martyr-death of the two great Christian teachers Peter and Paul, a continuous persecution harried the congregation (he is speaking especially of Rome) all through his own generation. "A vast multitude of the elect," he tells us, in their turn suffered martyrdom, and were joined to the eminent leaders who had gone before them. When Domitian perished we know there was a temporary lull in the storm of persecution. Dion relates how the Emperor Nerva dismissed those who were awaiting their trial on the charge of sacrilege. It was no doubt in this very brief period of comparative quiet that Clement had leisure to attend to the troubled affairs at the Church of Corinth, and to write the important letter just quoted from.

But the Roman bishop was aware that "the lull" was quite a temporary one, and was due only to the reaction which set in after the murder of Domitian during the short reign of the Emperor Nerva; for he goes on to speak (in chap. vi.)

of his condition and of the condition of his co-religionists at Rome : " We are in the same lists (with those who have been slain), and the same contest awaits us."

Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr, *circa* A.D. 107–10

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom in the days of Trajan, *circa* A.D. 107–10,—some twelve or fifteen years after Clement of Rome wrote his memorable letter to the Church of Corinth,—is the next witness we propose to call in support of the contention advanced in the preceding pages, namely, that the persecution began by Nero in the year 64 was never really allowed again to slumber, but that with more or less vehemence it continued to harass the Christian sect all through the reigns of the Emperors of the Flavian dynasty and onward.

The Letters of Ignatius were written, it is true, a few years after the extinction of the Flavian House. But the martyr-bishop of Antioch was born about the year of grace 40, and he therefore was about twenty-four years old when the persecution of Nero began ; and all through the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian without doubt he occupied a high position, probably in the Christian congregation at Antioch ; he therefore may well be cited as a responsible witness of the relations which existed between the Christians and the government of the Empire during the last thirty-five years of the first century.

In the course of his journey from Syria to Rome, where he was condemned to be exposed to the wild beasts in the magnificent Flavian amphitheatre (the Colosseum), Ignatius wrote seven letters which have been preserved to us ; six of these were addressed to special Churches, and one to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

Round these letters a long controversial war has raged respecting their authenticity. In our own day and time, thanks to the almost life-long labours of the eminent scholar-bishop of Durham (Dr. Lightfoot), the controversy has virtually been closed. Serious European scholars, with rare exceptions,

now accept the seven Epistles (the middle recension,[1] as Lightfoot calls it) of the Ignatian correspondence, as absolutely genuine.

Ramsay well and briefly sums up the purport of the allusions to the conditions under which the Christian sect had been and still was living during the long period of Ignatius' own personal experience, which included the whole duration of the sovereignty of the Flavian family, *i.e.* during the reign of the Emperors Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. These allusions all occur in the martyr's four letters written in the course of his journey to Rome, during his halt at Smyrna, *i.e.* in the Epistles to the Churches of Ephesus, Tralles, Magnesia and Rome.

He says, "These abound in delicate phrases, the most explicit of which may be quoted—The life of a Christian is a life of suffering; the climax of his life, and the crowning honour of which he gradually hopes to make himself worthy, is martyrdom; but Ignatius is far from confident that he is worthy of it (*Tralles*, 4). Suffering and persecution are the education of the Christian, and through them he becomes a true disciple (*Eph.* iii. *Magn.* viii. 9). The teacher, then, is the person or Church which has gone through most suffering, and thus shown true discipleship, and Ignatius distinguished Ephesus and Rome as his teachers. Ignatius is still in danger, not having as yet completely proved his steadfastness, whereas Ephesus has been proved and is firmly fixed, the implication being that it has been specially distinguished by the number of its martyrs; and, moreover, Ephesus has been the highway of martyrs, the chief city of the province where many, even from other parts, appeared before the proconsul for trial, and was, at the same time, the port whence they were sent to Rome. We read in the Letter to Ephesus the somewhat curious expression, 'Ye are a high road of them which are on their way to die unto God' (*Eph.* xii.)."

[1] So called from the position it holds between the *longer* recension of the "ten Letters," three of which are put aside as later compilations, and the *shorter* recension of three Letters which Canon Cureton found in the Syrian MS. and published, believing that these "three" were the only genuine Epistles of the martyr-bishop.

"A detailed comparison is made in the Letter to the Magnesians, viii. 9, between the prophets and the Christians of the age. The prophets were persecuted, and the Christians endure persecution patiently in order to become true disciples. . . . Such is the principle of the Christian life; that suffering is the best training. . . . The impression which had been produced by persecution on the feelings of the Christians towards the Empire is very strongly marked in the Letters of Ignatius. Outside of the Apocalypse, the irreconcilable opposition between the State and Christianity is nowhere more strongly expressed than in them, and there runs throughout both groups of writings the same identification of the State with the world. The same magnificent audacity towards the State, the same refusal to accept what seemed to men to be the plain facts of the situation, the same perfect assurance of victory, characterize both."[1]

With the exception, however, of passages in the *Epistle to the Romans*, Ignatius' letters contain no *direct* reference to persecution; they are exclusively devoted to the affairs and prospects of the Churches to which he was writing, but the whole spirit of the little collection indicates that persecution and suffering were the common lot of the Christian sect in the days of the Flavian Emperors and their immediate successors.

The letter to the Roman Church is, however, quite different in its contents from the other six. It is entirely taken up with one single topic—the coming martyrdom of the writer. For the Christian, indeed, in earnest, "martyrdom is the new birth, the true life, the pure light, the complete discipleship; the martyr's crown is better than all the kingdoms of the earth; only then, when the martyr sets to the world, will he rise to God. Crowned by martyrdom, his life becomes an utterance of God."

This fervid, passionate—if somewhat exaggerated—picture of martyrdom would convey little meaning to the Roman congregations had not such scenes as that depicted by Ignatius been of common occurrence in Rome. Its reception, however, shows how well it was understood by those to whom the burning words of the martyr-bishop were addressed. His

[1] Prof. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, chap. xiii.

letters were most highly prized in very early days, but this special Epistle to the Roman Church from the beginning enjoyed a wider popularity than the others. Its details and teaching were absolutely unique. It appears to have been circulated apart from the other six, sometimes alone, sometimes attached to the story of the martyrdom for which Ignatius so longed.

Two or three references in this letter deserve to be noted as bearing especially on the question of the sleepless nature of the persecution endured by the sect.

Epistle to Romans, 3. Bishop Lightfoot well paraphrases this passage, thus:

"Do not," writes Ignatius, urging the Roman Church not to take any step which might hinder his anticipated death in the arena, "depart from your true character; you have hitherto sped the martyrs forward to victory; do not now interpose and rob me of my crown." Rome had hitherto been the chief arena of martyrdom; the Roman brethren had cheered on many a dying Christian hero in his glorious contest.

In the *Epistle to Romans*, 5, we come upon the following curious statement concerning the arena wild beasts to which he was condemned: "May I have joy of the beasts that have been prepared for me; and I pray that I may find them ready, nay, I will entice them that they may devour me quickly, not as they have done to some, refusing to touch them through fear; yea, though of themselves they should not be willing while I am ready, I myself will force them to it."

This refusal of the wild beasts to touch their intended victims is by no means an uncommon incident in early martyrology. The capricious conduct of beasts suddenly released from confinement and darkness, and brought into the bright light of the amphitheatre, with the dense crowds of spectators all around shouting applause or execration, is quite natural. It is by no means necessary to impart the miraculous into all these stories, many of them absolutely authentic. Still that the Most High did at times close the mouths of the "wild" is quite credible. The strange, mys-

terious power often exercised by saintly men and women over furred and feathered untamed creatures is a well-known fact, and has been more than once the subject of discussion.[1] Such an allusion, however, to the occasional conduct of the wild creatures in the arena occurring in the midst of the writer's arguments, plainly shows that the spectacle of terrible massacres of Christian folk in the arena, where they were exposed to wild beasts, was no uncommon feature in Roman life.

The grim catalogue of tortures which the heroic martyr enumerates in the same chapter of the Roman Epistle, completed the awful picture of the sufferings of brave Christian confessors, sufferings which the Roman citizens had no doubt for many past years often gazed at.

[1] See Part I. section 1, chap. iii. in the author's work, *The Golden Age of the Church*, entitled, "The Monks and the Animal World," where this interesting question has been discussed at some length, and various examples are given.

II

SECOND GROUP OF QUOTATIONS

Letter of Pliny to Trajan, *circa* A.D. 112

IN the second group of quotations from ancient authorities must be placed the very important notice of the persecution in the days of Trajan, contained in the well-known correspondence of Pliny and the Emperor. This has been already discussed at some length.

It will be sufficient [1] here briefly to refer to the treatment of Christians whom Pliny found in his province of Bithynia not only in the towns but in the country villages, and to the influence which these Christians evidently exercised on the life of the province.

These Christians, with the exception of those who claimed to be citizens of Rome—who were sent to the capital for trial—were after the third examination, if they still continued contumacious, condemned and put to death on the authority of the governor (" perseverantes duci (ad mortem) jussi ").

This is the only heathen authority [2] quoted here, but its extreme importance in this inquiry into the condition of Christians in the Roman Empire in the days of Trajan and earlier will justify its insertion.

Letter to Diognetus, *circa* A.D. 117

The author of this very early Christian writing is unknown, and of the Diognetus to whom the letter is addressed we have

[1] The history, contents, and authenticity of this most weighty reference has been already discussed in all its bearings (see above, pp. 45-62).

[2] The well-known reference of Tacitus to the persecution of Nero has been referred to (see p. 103).

no knowledge. But the short writing in question is interesting and even eloquent, and its date can be ascertained with fair certainty from expressions contained in the letter. Christianity, when the writing was put out, was *a new thing in the world*—this is several times noticed in the letter.[1]

The following notable references to persecution occur: "Christians love all men, and are persecuted by all; they are unknown and (yet) condemned; they are put to death . . . they are in want of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour they are glorified; they are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled and bless; they are insulted and yet repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers; when punished they rejoice" (*Letter to Diognetus*, chap. v.).

"Do you not see them (the Christians) exposed to wild beasts, that they may be persuaded to deny the Lord, and yet not overcome? Do you not see that the more of them that are punished, the greater become the numbers of the rest" (*Letter to Diognetus*, chap. vii.).

"Then shalt thou both love and admire those that suffer punishment because they will not deny God."

. . . . . .

"Then shalt thou admire those who for righteousness' sake endure the fire which is but for a moment, and shalt count them happy, when thou shalt know (the nature of) that fire" (*Letter to Diognetus*, chap. x.).

The *Shepherd* of Hermas, *circa* A.D. 140

Hermas, the author or compiler of the once famous *Shepherd* (the Pastor) in a very ancient tradition was identified with the Hermas mentioned by S. Paul (Rom. xvi. 14). This identification was suggested by Origen in the middle of the third century. The Muratorian Canon gives as the approxi-

[1] The date *circa* A.D. 117 is suggested by Bishop Westcott, and Bishop Lightfoot generally agrees in placing the writing about this time. Some would even place its composition in the very early years of the second century. The last two chapters, xi.–xii., are fragmentary, and apparently were written a little—but very little—later.

mate date of its composition *circa* A.D. 140, and suggests another author. Modern scholarship, however, considers that the work in question passed through several redactions, the first belonging to a yet earlier date. If this, as is probable, be the case, then certainly considerable portions of the little volume of the "Shepherd" belong to the reign of Trajan, and possibly to the period of the episcopate of Clement of Rome.[1]

But whether we adopt for the composition of the writing the year 140, or thereabouts, or with Duchesne and Harnack the earlier date of portions of the writing (the last years of the first century), there is no doubt whatever that the work containing the "Visions," "Commandments," and "Parables" of Hermas (generally known as the *Shepherd*) was accepted by the Christians of the second century as a treatise of very high authority. It was publicly read in the congregations along with the canonical (to use a later term) Scriptures, without, however, being put on a level with these sacred writings.

Gradually though we find its authority diminishing, sterner spirits, like Tertullian, misliking its gentle and compassionate directions in the case of the reconciliation of sinners, theologians too, who in the first years were less positive, less precise in their dogmatical definitions, soon began to see how speculative and even wild were some of the statements and definitions of the Persons in the Godhead. Thus the work became less and less an important piece in the arsenal of Christian theology. S. Jerome, for instance, openly flouts it when he writes of the *Shepherd* as "Liber ille apocryphus stultitiæ condemnandus." Others, however, of the highest authority in the Church in the third and fourth centuries, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Athanasius, seem to have ever held the *Shepherd* in great veneration.

The high place it held in the early Church is shown by its appearing in that most ancient MS. of the Holy Scrip-

[1] So Harnack; Duchesne, in his *Histoire ancienne de l'Église*, vol. i. p. 225 (published 1908), generally adopts Harnack's conclusions respecting the early date. Lightfoot (vol. i. p. 360, *Clement of Rome*) also leans to the conclusion that the Clement of the *Shepherd* is the illustrious Bishop of Rome. This would postulate the earlier date for parts of the work.

tures the Codex Sinaiticus, where it is honoured by being placed at the end of the canonical writings.

But it is as an historical piece of evidence respecting the continued persecutions which vexed the early Church, without any period of cessation, that the work is quoted here. The *Shepherd* is full of references to this state of things. Renan *L'Église Chrétienne*) describes this book in his picturesque vivid imagery as "issuing from a bath of blood." Lightfoot speaks of it as "haunted in large parts by this ghastly spectre of persecution." The writer specially alludes to this harrying of the Christian sect in the past, and says that it was likely to continue in the future.

Hermas, in his unique and interesting work, says nothing about the Jewish foes of the Church, and his allusions to the pagans around him are very few. The work may be said to deal exclusively with the inner life of the Roman congregations. On the whole he pictures the life led by the followers of Jesus as fairly satisfactory and good, harassed though it was, but there were many things constantly appearing and reappearing in that life which needed amendment. He dwells with more or less detail on differences, quarrels, bitterness, which arose among themselves, and which too often disfigured and marred the beautiful Christian ideals.

But after all, in Hermas' evidently faithful and accurate pictures of the Christian congregations in Rome, the point he dwells on with the greatest emphasis is their behaviour in those ever-recurring trials of their faith to which they were constantly exposed through the sleepless, restless ill-will of the Government. Whether the writing dates from *circa* 140, when Hadrian was reigning, or in part from the last years of the first century in the days of Trajan, it is evident that the position of the Christian community was ever most precarious.

The rescripts of Trajan and Hadrian somewhat softened the stern measures, but before and even after these humane and statesmanlike regulations the position of the Christian was indeed a trying and painful one. For even after the issuing of the rescripts in question the sword ever hung over their heads, and the slender thread upon which it hung was often snapped.

Perpetually were the Christians haled before the magistrate. They had stern searching questions to answer; easily was the capital crime of professing the unlawful cult daily brought home to them. They were asked: Were they willing to renounce it, and in place of it adore the gods of the pagans? Would they throw a few grains of incense, as a token of their recantation, on the altars of Rome and Augustus? If they would do this very little thing, as it seemed, at once they were released; but if they refused, then death, in some form or other, was their speedy and inevitable doom.

Hermas tells us a good deal of what was happening in the Roman congregations in the matter of persecution for the Name's sake. The harrying of Christians, when the author of the *Shepherd* was writing, must have been continuous, for he sadly speaks of those who were frequently yielding to pressure. Apostasy in the Christian ranks was, alas! not an unknown scandal. Some, he tells us, simply renounced their faith; others, terrified, went further and publicly blasphemed the Name. Some were positively base enough to betray and denounce their brethren in the Faith.

But, on the other hand, Hermas tells us how the Church numbered many martyrs. All, he says, were not on a level even here, for some trembled at first and flinched, and only witnessed a good confession at the last, probably when about to cense the idol altar. There were some though, said our writer, whose heart never for an instant failed them.

Yet, on the whole, this stern though kindly censor of the Christian Church was not dissatisfied with the life generally led by the congregations of believers in Jesus; he seems to recognise to the full the sorely tempted lives—tempted not only by the imminent danger which the confession of the Name entailed—though he dwells mostly on this ever-present peril—but also by the smaller lures with which all human existence is inextricably bound up: business matters, society obligations, the old jealousy and envy which ever exist between the rich and the poor.

"Le livre d'Hermas," observes Duchesne, "est un vaste examen de conscience de l'Église Romaine." The writer spares none in his severe yet kindly criticism; the priests and

deacons of the congregations are among the classes with whom he finds grave fault. In spite, however, of his earnest and touching remonstrances with those who, in hours of trial and persecution, in the many daily temptations of common life, had left their first love, Hermas acknowledges that in the Church of Rome the numbers of the just and upright are greater than the numbers of those who have fallen away. It is true that he sternly rebukes the unfaithful priests and deacons and other members of the hierarchy, but he recognizes here, too, men worthy of the highest commendation ; he dwells on their love, their charity, their hospitality, and even assigns to these faithful ministers of religion a place among the glorious company of apostles.

The general impression which a careful study of Hermas' portraiture of the Christian congregations in Rome leaves on the reader's mind in those far-back days, roughly from the days of Nero to the times of Trajan and even Hadrian, is that that great and sorely tried Church was far from being composed entirely of saints, but that the righteous and God-fearing—the men and women who had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, as true disciples of the Master, were after all decidedly in the majority.

Closely connected with his picture of the sins and errors of the Roman Christians—sins largely connected with the falling away of many in the dread hour of persecution—is his assurance that these sins are capable of pardon here, even if committed *after* baptism. No sin, no falling away, in Hermas' teaching is inexpiable ; no truly penitent one is ever to be excluded from pardon and reconciliation. It was this generous and broad view of the goodness and the divine pity of God that was so misliked by the stern and pitiless teachers of the powerful school to which men like Tertullian belonged, a school which soon arose in the Church. Of the genuine written remains of the earliest period we have nothing comparable to the *Shepherd* of Hermas, when we look for a picture of the inner life of the Church of Rome in that far-back time when the echoes of the voices of the disciples who had been with Jesus were still ringing in men's ears.

As a dogmatic teacher the writer of the *Shepherd* is of little or no value; Hermas emphatically was no theologian, but he was a close and evidently an accurate observer of men and things. Earnest and devout, while sadly deploring the weakness in the hour of trial of some, the failure of others in the ordinary course of things to keep on the narrow way leading to life—he rejoices with an unfeigned joy over the many noble men and women who, in all their sore danger and temptation, kept the Faith untarnished and undimmed.

Hermas of the *Shepherd* is a witness, to whose voice none can refuse to listen, of the sore and sleepless persecution which, from the days of Nero, with rare and brief pauses ever harassed the Christian sect in Rome.[1]

Composed as this book evidently was directly under the veiled shadow of persecution—a state of things which colours well-nigh every page of the writing—it is difficult out of so many testimonies here to select any special passage telling of this perpetual harrying of the sect; a very few passages will be quoted where this restless state of persecution is painted with vivid colouring.

"Happy ye who endure the great tribulation that is coming on, and happy they who shall not deny their own life" (Hermas, *Vision*, ii. 2).

"The place to the right is for others who have pleased God, and have suffered for His Name's sake" (Hermas, *Vision*, iii. 1).

"What have they borne? Listen: Scourges, prisons, great tribulations, crosses, wild beasts for God's Name's sake—to them is assigned the division of sanctification on the right hand—to every one who shall suffer for God's Name" (Hermas, *Vision*, iii. 2).

"But who are the stones that were dragged from the depths and which were laid in the building, and fitted in with the rest of the stones before placed in the Tower? These are they who suffered for the Lord's sake" (Hermas, *Vision*, iii. 5).

[1] What Hermas wrote specially of Rome, no doubt in a very large degree was the state of things in the provinces of the Empire. This is clear from the great and *general* popularity enjoyed by the *Shepherd* in the first two centuries. The picture of Christian life in Rome was recognized as an accurate picture of their own life, by the citizens of Corinth and Alexandria, by the dwellers in Ephesus and Antioch.

"They without hesitation repented, and practise all virtue and righteousness, and some of them even suffered, being willingly put to death,"—"Of all these, therefore, the dwelling shall be in the Tower."

"All who were brought before the authorities and were examined, and did not deny, but suffered gladly, these are held in great honour with God" (Hermas, *Parables*, viii. 10).

"All who once suffered for the name of the Lord are honourable before God, and of all these the sins were remitted because they suffer for the Name of the Son of God" (Hermas, *Parables*, viii. 20).

"And ye who suffer for His Name ought to glorify God, because He deemed you worthy to bear His Name, that all your sores might be healed" (Hermas, *Parables*, viii. 28).

Justin Martyr, *circa* A.D. 140–A.D. 160

The above dates roughly embrace the period of Justin's literary activity. He was, however, born not later than *circa* A.D. 114, probably several years before. We know little of his early history. He was a diligent student and a thinker, and his works are amongst the most important that have come down to us from the first sixty years of the second century. Three writings of his are extant of the genuineness of which there is no doubt. Two *Apologies* and *The Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*. The first *Apology* and the *Dialogue* are works of considerable size. There are besides other writings which bear his name, but the authenticity of these is doubtful.

Originally a pagan, it seems that he became a Christian owing to the strong impression made upon him by the fearlessness which the disciples of the New Sect showed in the presence of death. He was also deeply persuaded of the grandeur and truth of the old Testament Scriptures. In the end, while the Emperor Marcus Antoninus was reigning, he received the Martyr's crown he had for so many years passionately admired and coveted. This was about the year 165.

His three authentic writings contain numberless references to the persecutions endured by the followers of the Name, and

countless allusions to the state of perpetual risk and danger in which his co-religionists lived and worked.

We will cite a very few of these, in which unmistakable details are given.

"If any one acknowledges that he is a Christian, you punish him on account of this confession" (Justin, *Apol.* i. 4).

The condemnation to death for the mere name of Christian is often dwelt upon by our writer (see such passages as are contained in 1 *Apol.* xi.).

"We may not lie or deceive our (official) interrogators; we willingly die confessing Christ" (Justin, *Apol.* i. 39).

"Although death is decreed against those who teach, or even confess the name of Christ, everywhere we confess it and teach it" (Justin, *Apol.* i. 45).

"They that believe that there is nothing after death . . . they become our benefactors when they free us from the sufferings and trials of this life; . . . they kill us, however, not with the view of benefiting us, but that we may be deprived of life and joy" (Justin, *Apol.* i. 57).

"The Gentiles who know God—the Creator of all things through Jesus the Crucified . . . patiently await every torture and vengeance—even death—rather than worship idols" (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, xxxv.).

". . . Lest you be persecuted by the rulers who . . . will not cease putting to death and persecuting those who confess the Name of Christ . . ." (Justin, *Dial.* xxxix.).

". . . Because we refuse to sacrifice to those to whom in old times we used to sacrifice to, we suffer the severest penalties, and rejoice in death, believing that God will raise us up by His Christ, and will make us incorruptible—safe—immortal" (Justin, *Dial.* xlvi.).

"Now it is plain that no one is able to frighten us or subject us who have believed in Jesus, . . . for it is manifest that though beheaded and crucified, and cast to wild beasts, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others, and in ever-increasing numbers too, become believers and worshippers of God through the Name of Jesus" (Justin, *Dial.* cx.).

"And you yourselves . . . must acknowledge that we who have been called by God through the contemned and shameful mystery of the Cross . . . endure all torments rather than deny Christ even by word" (Justin, *Dial.* cxxxi.).

"For having put some to death on account of the false charges brought against us, they also dragged to the torture our servants—children—weak women—and by awful torments drove them to admit that they were guilty of those very actions which they (the persecutors) openly perpetrate,—about which, however, we are little concerned, because none of these actions are really ours. We have the ineffable God as witness both of our thoughts and deeds" (Justin, II. *Apol.* xii.).

The *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, *circa* A.D. 160

Jerome tells us that Minucius Felix was, before his conversion to Christianity, an advocate at Rome. The dialogue, which forms the substance of the writing—a work of some considerable length, is a supposed argument between a cultured pagan Cæcilius and the Christian Octavius—the writer Minucius Felix acting as arbiter between the disputants. The scene of the dialogue was the sea-shore of Ostia, it closes with the conversion of the pagan Cæcilius, who is convinced by the arguments brought forward by the Christian Octavius.[1]

The resemblances between Minucius Felix and the famous *Apology* of Tertullian, which was written *circa* A.D. 200, are most striking—and the question which of the two was the plagiarist has long been before critics. Later scholars, among whom Ebert, Salmon, Bishop Lightfoot, Renan, and Keim are conspicuous, have conclusively established the priority of Minucius. The year of grace 160, before the death of Antoninus Pius, a date based upon the internal evidence of the writing, is suggested by Lightfoot as the most probable period of the composition.

Dean Milman's estimate of the literary excellence of the piece is as follows: "Perhaps no late work, either pagan or

[1] A more detailed description of the famous *Dialogue* of Minucius Felix will be found on pp. 145–6.

Christian, reminds us of the golden days of Latin prose so much as the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix" (*Hist. of Christianity*, book iv. chap. iii.).

The following striking passages bearing on the subject of the ceaseless persecution to which the Christians were subjected in the middle years of the second century are taken from the thirty-seventh chapter of the *Dialogue:*

"How beautiful before God is the spectacle of a Christian entering into the lists with pain, when he is matched against threats and punishments and tortures; when, deriding the noise of death, he treads under foot the horror of the public executioner; when he raises up his liberty in opposition to kings and princes, and yields to God alone, whose he is; when, triumphant and a victor, he tramples upon the very man who has pronounced sentence against him! For he has conquered who has won that for which he fights. . . . But God's soldier is neither forsaken in suffering, nor is he brought to an end by death. Thus the Christian may seem to be miserable, he cannot really be found to be so. You yourselves extol unfortunate men to the skies. Mucius Scævola, for instance, who, when he had failed in his attempts against the king, would have perished . . . had he not sacrificed his right hand. And how many of our people have endured that not only their right hand but that their whole body should be burned—burned without a cry of pain—though they had it in their power to be freed!

. . . "Do I compare Christian men with Mucius or even with Regulus? Yet boys and young girls mock at crosses and tortures, wild beasts and all the terrors of punishment—with all the inspired patience of suffering" (Minucius Felix, cap. xxxvii.).

Melito, Bishop of the Church in Sardis, *circa* A.D. 170

Very little is known of this Melito; he was evidently a somewhat voluminous writer, but only few fragments remain of the long list of his works which Eusebius has given (*H.E.* Book vi. 26). In one of these fragments of a discourse, addressed to the Emperor Marcus, the following passage occurs:

"What indeed never before happened, the race of the pious (the Christians) is now persecuted, driven about in Asia by new and strange decrees. For the shameless informers are those that covet the goods of others, and, making use of the edicts of the Emperors, openly commit robbery, night and day, plundering those (the Christians) who are guilty of no crime. . . . And if these things are carried out by your commands (*i.e.* of the Emperor Marcus), let them at least be done in a legal form. . . . We (Christians) indeed bear joyfully the guerdon of such a death—still, we only urge upon you this petition, that you yourself would first inquire into the persons of these plotters of mischief, and judge whether they themselves deserve death and punishment, or safety and immunity. . . . We entreat you not to forget us in the midst of this lawless plunder of the populace" (Melito of Sardis, Fragment quoted by Eusebius, *H.E.* iv. 26).

Athenagoras, *circa* A.D. 177

It is singular how little information has come down to us concerning this Athenian philosopher who had become a Christian. It is believed he wrote much, but the very names of his works have perished. The only fragments of Athenagoras that remain are his *Apology*, or *Embassy*, as he styles it, addressed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus, and a treatise on *The Resurrection*.

Philip of Side[1] gives one interesting detail respecting this little known early writer. He tells us he was converted to Christianity by the Scriptures, which he was studying with the view of controverting them.

The following passage is from the *Apology* or *Embassy* of Athenagoras.

He is addressing the Emperors Marcus and Commodus. and then writes: "Why is the mere name (of Christian) hateful to you? Names (surely) are not deserving of hatred. It is the wrongful act that calls for penalty and punishment. But, for us who are called Christians you have had no care,

[1] Side was a maritime town of Pamphylia. Philip wrote in the early part of the fifth century.

though we commit no wrong. . . . You allow us to be harassed—plundered—persecuted—the people warring with us for our name alone. . . . We suffer unjustly contrary to the law. . . . We beseech you to have some care for us, that we may cease at length to be slaughtered at the instigation of false accusers. . . . When we have surrendered our goods, they still plot against our very bodies and souls—levelling against us many charges of crimes of which we are guiltless even in thought" (chap. i.).

". . . If indeed any one can convict us of a crime either small or great, we do not plead to be let off punishment; we are then prepared to suffer the sharpest and most merciless chastisement, but if the accusation is merely concerned with our *Name* . . . then, O illustrious sovereigns, it is your part to free us by law from their evil treatment. . . . What therefore is granted as the common right of all, we too claim for ourselves, that we shall not be hated and punished merely because we are called Christians" (Athenagoras, chap. ii.).

The above quotations from Athenagoras show very clearly on what apparently superficial grounds the Christians were bitterly persecuted and harassed in every conceivable fashion —solely because they were Christians. The *nomen ipsum*, the bare "name," was a sufficient ground of condemnation in the reign of the great and good Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

Theophilus of Antioch, *circa* A.D. 180

Theophilus, according to Eusebius, *H.E.* iv. 20–24, was sixth Bishop of the Syrian Antioch in succession (so Eusebius). He became bishop in the year 168, when Marcus was reigning. Nothing is known of his life save that he was born a pagan. He was the author of several works—including *Commentaries* on the Gospels and on the Book of Proverbs, and of a writing against Marcion, etc. But none of these have come down to us. All we possess are the three books containing "the Elements of the Faith," addressed to his friend Autolycus. The quoted passage is from the third of these books. His arguments in many respects are similar to those advanced by Justin Martyr.

"They persecute, and do daily persecute, those who worship Him (the only God). . . . Of those (*i.e.* of the Christians) who are zealous in the pursuit of virtue, and practise a holy life, some they stone, some they put to death, and up to the present time they subject them to cruel torture."

TERTULLIAN, *CIRCĀ* A.D. 195–211

To complete the chain of testimony supplied by contemporary writers to the perpetual state of unrest, an unrest ever passing into active persecution, which was the lot of the Christian sect from A.D. 64, the date of the first formal harrying of Nero, to A.D. 180, the date of the death of the Emperor Marcus, the period here under consideration—the important witness of Tertullian is added. The years of his literary activity stretch roughly from A.D. 195–211. But although the dates of his works range from some fifteen to twenty years after the death of Marcus, it is certain that his general view of the condition of Christians would include at least the latter years of the period we are specially dwelling on.

His treatises, which especially relate to Christian and church life and to ecclesiastical discipline, are coloured with references to this condition of persecution under which the Christian sect evidently lived. The very numerous references in question are introduced casually as though the dangerous conditions were a matter of course, were inescapable, and entered into the ordinary life of the sect.

We cite a very few of these as specimen instances of Tertullian's conception of the life so environed with deadly perils.

The whole of the short and interesting address to "Blessed Martyrs designate" in this connection should be read here.

"We are daily beset by foes, we are daily betrayed, we are oftentimes surprised in our meetings and congregations" (Tertullian, *Apol.* 7).

"Without ceasing for our Emperors we offer prayer . . . we ask for whatever, as man or Cæsar, an Emperor could wish. . . . With our hands thus stretched out and up to God, rend us with your iron claws, hang us up on crosses, wrap us in

flames, take our heads from us with the sword, let loose the wild beasts on us; the very attitude of a Christian praying is one of preparation for its punishment. Let this, good rulers, be your work, wring from us the soul beseeching God on the Emperor's behalf. Upon the truth of God, and devotion to His Name, put the brand of crime" (Tertullian, *Apol.* 30).

"Christians alone are forbidden to say anything in their defence to help the judge to a righteous decision; all that is cared about is getting what the public hatred demands—the confession of the Name" (Tertullian, *Apol.* 2).

Constantly Tertullian refers to the great offence in the Christians simply lying in "the Name." "Your sentences, however, are only to this effect, viz.: that one has confessed himself to be a Christian," occurs frequently (Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 8).

PART II

THE TRAINING FOR MARTYRDOM

Introductory

WE read in the pathetic and interesting study *De Laude Martyrii* (On the Praise of Martyrdom) by an anonymous writer—a study which usually follows the works of S. Cyprian—how some Roman officials who were assisting in the torture of a dying Christian saint said one to another : " This is really marvellous, this power of disregarding pain and agony ! Nothing seems to move him ; he has a wife and little ones, but even the love of these touches him not. What *is* the secret of his strange power ? It can surely be no imaginary faith which enables him thus to welcome such suffering—such a death ! "

The moral effect of this endurance—of this serene acceptance of torture and death—both on persecutors and persecuted, was no doubt very great. It has probably been underrated. What we have just quoted from the treatise *De Laude Martyrii, i.e.* the testimony to what must have happened many thousand times—viz. : how it struck the officials who were carrying out the stern law of Rome—was repeated in our own day and time by one of our most serious historians ; one not likely by any means to have been carried away by religious enthusiasm. Lecky, in his scrupulously fair but at the same time cold and passionless chapter on early Christian persecutions, closes his review of the period with the following remarkable words : " For the love of their Divine Master, for the cause they believed to be true, men, and even weak girls, endured these things (he has been detailing some of the well-known tortures and deaths of the early Christian believers)

without flinching, when one word would have freed them from their sufferings. No opinion we may form of the proceedings of priests in a later age should impair the reverence with which we bend before the martyr's tomb." [1]

Now, the more thoughtful of the pagan rulers who dreaded with a nameless dread the overthrow of the idol-cult, the preservation of which they believed was indissolubly linked with the maintenance of the great Roman Empire they loved so well, saw in the constancy of the martyrs a great danger to which this idol-cult was exposed.

Rulers so different as Nero and Domitian, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Antoninus, Severus, Decius, and Diocletian, and their ministers, felt that the sternest measures of repression of the new Faith were absolutely necessary if they would stem the fast advancing and apparently resistless tide of Christianity in the Empire.

In view of the powerful impression which the constancy of the accused Christian when brought face to face with all the horrors of torture and of death made upon the pagan population who beheld it or heard of it, every effort was made by the more far-seeing of the Roman magistrates to induce the accused Christian to recant and to yield to the will and wishes of the imperial government.

In countless cases this yielding was made seemingly very easy—just a few grains of incense thrown upon an idol altar; just an acknowledgment of the divinity of the reigning Emperor, which could after all be explained away as a simple official expression of fervid loyalty.

In some cases a recognition of one supreme deity—Jupiter—who would represent the one Almighty God of the Christians—was suggested as a "modus vivendi" by the plausible rhetoric of a statesmanlike magistrate who cared for Rome, but to whom all religions were myths.

The Christian senator, who for the sake of Christ had given up a beautiful home and an exalted rank, would be reminded by his pagan colleagues on the judge's seat of the inescapable duty which one in his great position owed to law and order—to his master the Emperor;—surely he, of all

[1] Lecky, *History of European Morals*, chap. iii., "The Persecutions," pp. 497–8.

men, should set an example of loyalty and obedience; was he to degrade his proud order by worshipping an unknown Crucified offender in defiance of the wishes and commands of the Emperor and the imperial government?

A yet more moving appeal was very often made to the brave Christians of both sexes by an eloquent magistrate to show some pity for those they loved,—for their aged father and mother; for husband or wife or helpless children. Were they by their fatal obstinacy to bring bereavement and disgrace, shame and poverty, on these unoffending ones?

Then behind all these specious arguments the Roman judge would show the pale confessor standing before him the awful tortures—the cruel death which surely awaited the one who refused, with what seemed a sullen and inexplicable obstinacy, to obey the laws of an immemorial Empire, when after all obedience was so easy.

And many did yield—of this there is no doubt. The number of martyrs who resisted unto death no doubt is very great, much greater than the cold and passionless critic chooses to acknowledge, but the number of those who did yield was no doubt considerable.

It was indeed a title to honour for a magistrate of Rome publicly to win over one or more of these confessors of the New Religion, to succeed in persuading some well-known Christian to scatter on the altar of the deified Emperor, or of the popular image of Mars the Avenger, or of Diana, or of the yet greater Jupiter, a few grains of incense typifying his return to the ancient pagan cult—or better still, to extract a few reluctant words in which the adored Christ was renounced and abandoned.

Such a judicial victory was ever a signal triumph for the Roman pagan judge. It would speedily bear its fruits and rally to the drooping standard of paganism a number of men and women pondering, doubting, hesitating on the threshold of Christianity; a threshold with such an example of recantation before them, which they would surely never cross!

And these scenes during the long years of active persecution were acted again and again. The war between the religion of Christ and the old idol-cult so dear to Rome and her subject millions was indeed a protracted and deadly combat, and,

as far as men could see, the issue for long years trembled in the balance.

And all this time much—more than men now think—hung on the grave and solemn question of martyrdom.

It was an outward and visible sign of that new wonderful revelation which was influencing so many different minds, which was working restlessly in such varied classes, in Rome, and in the many provinces of the world of Rome, which from the early days of its appearance in the great Empire, began at once to work a mighty change in all ranks in all society where it penetrated, and every year it penetrated deeper.

The New Revelation was taught by an ever-increasing band of teachers, fervid, impassioned, eloquent—some of them learned and cultivated. It possessed too a literature which gradually increased in volume and power—a literature which was founded upon "a Record" which these teachers affirmed issued from no workshops of this earth.

But all this literature, powerful, soul-stirring though it was, only touched, comparatively speaking, a very few of the men and women who made up the mighty world of Rome. The great mass of the peoples of the Empire neither read the books nor heard the words of the teachers of the New Religion.

Something more was needed to touch the masses of the people—*something* thousands might see and hear of; something they might see for themselves. That something was supplied by the noble army of martyrs.

From the first days of the appearance of the new teaching the imperial government of Rome was determined, if possible, to stamp it out of the society which Rome controlled.

While the disciples of Him who gave the doctrine and the solemn charge to His own to teach the strange wonderful story to all men, were still living and bravely carrying out the command of their Master, began the relentless persecution of those who received the New Revelation (men named them Christians after their Master Christ); a persecution which was now fitful and uncertain, now fierce and relentless in its action, now languid and halting, but which never slept. During the two

centuries and a half, the period roughly from Nero to Constantine,—to be a Christian was simply unlawful, and exposed its votary to the direst penalties, which at times were rigorously exacted. The law of the State at times was suffered to remain in partial abeyance; but to use the great African teacher's nervous words spoken to the Christian Brotherhood, during all these long years—"Non licet esse vos."[1]

The more statesmanlike of the Roman rulers, recognising the influence exercised by the martyrs over the people, as we have remarked, by all the means in their power encouraged apostasy—because a public renunciation of the Faith deeply moved the people. Every public act of apostasy was a heavy blow to the Christian cause; while on the other hand, each example of splendid endurance of suffering and death was a wonderful encouragement to the vast crowd of outsiders who were hesitating on the borderland of Christianity. What must be, thought these, and they were a great multitude, the secret power of the new Faith which could nerve strong men, tender women—of all ages and of different ranks—to endure such awful sufferings, and at the end to meet death with a smile lighting up the wan pain-wrung faces.

I

The *Story* they told must be true, otherwise never would it possess such a mighty power.

Now, the leaders of the sect of the New Revelation were fully conscious of these two factors in the life of their day and time. Anything like apostasy or public renunciation of the religion of Christ once adopted was a calamity to be guarded against with the utmost vigilance. On the other hand, each example of public endurance to the end was an enormous aid to the work of propagating the Faith,—so from very early days a *school*—we can use no other fitting term—was established in the great Christian centres, *of preparation for Martyrdom*. This most interesting and far-reaching work in the very early Church—the Church of the Ages of Persecution—has

[1] "It is not lawful to be you," but it is impossible to render in English the full force of this epigrammatic saying of Tertullian.

hitherto generally escaped notice; only quite lately has it attracted some attention.[1]

It was no haphazard temporary piece of work, this "training for martyrdom," but as we shall see a veritable "school," a protracted education for an awful, for a not improbable contingency. At the end of the second and through the third century it was evidently a recognized and important Christian agency. When once we are aware of its existence we begin to find unmistakable proofs of it in the writings of important teachers like Tertullian and Cyprian.

In this once famous but now forgotten school of martyrdom the well-known simile of S. Paul was the basis of the theory which seems to have inspired the work—the simile which compared the Christian combatant in the world-arena to the athlete in the well-known and popular games of the amphitheatre. There the athlete, before entering the theatre of combat, was carefully educated to endure hardness: a long and careful training before such an one could hope to win the palm and the crown was absolutely necessary. He must go through many long, laborious, and painful exercises, abstinence, watchings, fastings, before his body was fit to endure the perils and sufferings of a trained combatant in the public arena.

In like manner must the Christian athlete who looked forward to a possible martyr's trial train himself. S. Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, thus definitely writes of what clearly had been the practice of the Church: "Ad agonem sæcularem, exercentur homines et parantur . . . Armari et præparari nos beatus Apostolus docet."[2] ("For the combat with the world are men trained and prepared. . . . The blessed apostle teaches us to be all armed and ready.")

The prize of martyrdom was very great. The visions and dreams of the blessed sufferers were constantly read aloud in the congregation.

At the moment after death angels would bear them into

[1] De Boissier, the Academician, specially calls attention to it as a somewhat novel piece of very early ecclesiastical history, and he refers his readers to a comparatively little known study on this subject by M. Le Blant, a well-known scholar in early Christian lore; of this "Study" of Le Blant, De Boissier speaks with the highest praise.

[2] S. Cyprian, Epist. lxvi. *ad Thibaritanos.*

Paradise—the garden of God. They would be welcomed there with words of triumph and even admiration. The Master would Himself receive His redeemed servants who had fought the good fight and won. His kiss of welcome, the touch of His hand, would at once fill their souls with a joy indescribable. The "Vision of Perpetua," *circa* A.D. 200, or a little earlier, one of the early Passions of Martyrs, the absolute authenticity of which is undisputed,—for it has never been added to or re-edited,—is a good example of the "Visions" seen by the martyrs before their supreme trial.

But far more than the public recital of these well-loved acts and passions was required for the training and preparation work, so a number of short treatises or tracts were specially composed and put out for the instruction of the earnest and devoted men and women as "Manuals," so to speak, of preparation for the great trial. Most of these have disappeared; they were composed by fervid teachers for a special season, for the years when the Church was exposed to bitter trial; and when the trial time was over they were no longer required, and as a rule were not preserved. A very few remain to us, such as the "Exhortatio ad Martyrium" of Origen, such tractates of Tertullian as "ad Martyres" and the "Scorpiace"; the letter "Ad Thibaritanos" of S. Cyprian, and the anonymous work quoted at the beginning of this chapter, *De Laude Martyrii*. These are fair specimens of what was once a considerable literature. In very many of the "Passions of the Martyrs" which have been preserved we meet with an oft-repeated answer made by the Christian to the judge when asked about his rank in life, country, family, and the like. "*I am a Christian*" was the almost invariable answer to these questions; often nothing more. This seems to have been the "formula" taught in the schools of martyrdom,—very few traces, however, of this "formula" appear in the treatises which have come down to us; it must, however, have been constantly repeated in the "lost" treatises or tracts placed in the hands of those under training, lost treatises to which reference has been made. The Epistle of S. Ignatius to the Romans was no doubt used as one of these treatises or manuals.

The words too of a famous teacher like Cyprian, who himself in the end suffered martyrdom, were treasured up. Some of them are contained in the Vision of S. Flavian before he suffered: "I saw in a dream the martyr Bishop of Carthage, and I said to him: 'Cyprian, is the death stroke very agonizing?' He replied: 'When the soul is in a state of heavenly rapture the suffering flesh is no longer ours; the body is quite insensible to pain when the spirit is with God."

This conception of the insensibility to pain on the part of the martyr was a very general one. Tertullian repeats it almost in identical words. S. Felicitas, quoted in the Passion of S. Perpetua above referred to, said: "When I am in the amphitheatre the Lord will be there and will suffer for me."

S. Perpetua in the same well-known "Passion," after having been tossed and gored by a wild and maddened beast, woke up from the ecstacy into which she had been plunged and asked the official standing near her when she was to be exposed to the infuriated animal. S. Blandina in another cruel scene of martyrdom was equally insensible to pain—her soul was far away speaking with or praying to the Lord.

But of all the various "Manuals of Martyrdom" which were put into the hands of those who desired to receive a special training against the day of trial, none seemed to have been efficacious, easy of comprehension, persuasive—like the words of S. Matthew's Gospel. These were evidently committed to memory and murmured again and again in the sore hour of trial.

Such sayings as these—they were the Lord's own words, the sufferer knew: "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "How[1] strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life." "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess ME before men, him

[1] A very ancient and probably an authoritative reading. When in the text the language of didactic calmness passes suddenly into the language of emotion: "How strait is the gate," etc.—S. Matt. vii. 13, 14.

will I confess (acknowledge) before My Father which is in heaven." "But whosoever shall deny ME before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."

"He that loveth father and mother more than ME is not worthy of ME." "And he that loveth son or daughter more than ME is not worthy of ME."

"If any man will come after ME, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow ME."

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

But the "training for martyrdom" to which a number of Christians in the first, second, and third centuries voluntarily gave themselves was by no means confined to the mastering of the contents of a small collection of carefully prepared treatises, or to the listening to eloquent and burning exhortations of devoted teachers, or even to the constant dwelling on the words of the Divine Master. This training included a prolonged and carefully balanced practice in austerities which would accustom the body to self-denial and to suffering, so that when the agony of the trial really began, the body, thoroughly enured to endurance, would be able to meet pain without flinching.

In this training for the mortal combat in which victory was so all-important to the cause, no efforts were spared—painful and laborious exercises, long fasting, watching and prayer, which would render the body insensible to fatigue, capable of bearing any suffering however poignant, were constantly practised. This training sometimes went on for a long while before a fitting opportunity presented itself of a public trial.

It was the want of this—the absence of this long and careful training alluded to in the beautiful and evangelical letter describing the Lyons and Vienne martyrdoms, which was the cause of many of the earlier failures, and shrinking from the agony of martyrdom, of some of the Lyons sufferers.

II

That great and severe master Tertullian, writing about A.D. 200, gives us some details of the austerities practised by those in training for a martyr's death. We will quote a very few of his burning words here.

"Blessed martyrs designate, think," he wrote, "how in peace soldiers (he was speaking of the training of the unconquered legions of Rome) inure themselves to war by toils, marching in heavy armour, running over the exercise yard, working at the ditches, framing the heavy 'testudo,' engaging in numberless arduous labours, so that when the day of battle comes, the body and mind may not shrink as it passes from the robe of peace to the coat of mail, from silence to clamour, from quiet to tumult. In like manner, oh blessed ones! count whatever is hard in this lot of yours which you have taken up, as a discipline of mind and body. You are about to pass through a noble struggle in which the living God is the President, the Holy Ghost is the trainer, in which the prize is an eternal crown of angelic life. . . . Therefore your Master Jesus Christ has seen good before the day of conflict . . . to impose on you a hard training that your strength may be greater" . . . "the harder the labours in the training of preparation, the stronger is the hope of victory, . . . for valour is built up by hardship."[1]

In other places Tertullian quotes S. Paul in such passages as: "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope" (Rom. v. 3, 4); and again: "Therefore I take pleasure" (2 Cor. xii. 10) "in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" . . . "always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 10); and again (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18), "Though our outward man perisheth yet the inward man is renewed day by day. . . . For our light affliction, which is but for a monent, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the

[1] Tertullian, *Ad Martyres*, 3.

things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." [1]

In his treatise on "Idolatry" Tertullian enters even more into detail on this question of "training for martyrdom." He enjoined that every kind of austerity should be practised,—for instance, that hunger and thirst should be endured as an habitual observance.

This fervid exhortation closes with the singular words: "An over-fed Christian will be more necessary to bears and lions, perchance, than to God; to encounter wild beasts it will surely be his duty to train for emaciation."

All this and much more in this curious "Study" of Tertullian partake of exaggeration, but it throws considerable light on the manner on which martyrdom was positively trained for, and the body prepared for the endurance of terrible suffering, a suffering invariably closed by death. Every example of such a bravely patient endurance—every "resistance unto blood"—the Christian guides and leaders of the first 250 years felt was of inestimable value for the propagation of their cause. Every public defeat and recantation, on the other hand, would be a grave injury to their work; so the pagan government strained, as we have remarked, every nerve to make recantation easy; while the Christian masters, on the contrary, did everything which ingenuity could invent or fervid devotion suggest to train up athletes who in the supreme public trial might win the prize of martyrdom.

They were successful—in spite of many defeats. These schools of martyrdom produced in Rome and in the provinces a countless succession of brave men and women of all ranks, of all ages—who, to the amazement of the pagan world, through pain and agony again and again won the martyr's blood-stained glorious crown. It was quite a novel experience in the world, and the effect which it had worked on the rank and file of men and women was only clearly seen after the Peace of the Church. The people of Rome, from what they had seen, were persuaded with an intense persuasion, no one doubting that a Faith which could produce such

[1] Quoted in the *Scorpiace* of Tertullian, and much more from S. Paul to the same point.

heroes was surely based on *something* which was true and real.

Some eighty or at most ninety years before Tertullian lived and wrote, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, on his way to Rome, where he was doomed to be exposed to the wild beasts in the great amphitheatre, wrote his famous letter to the Roman Church.

The date of the letter is about A.D. 107–10. The little writing was highly esteemed in the early Church. It may be fairly styled a *vade mecum* of martyrs in the age of persecution. It accurately embodies the thoughts and aspirations which the "School of Martyrs" we have been picturing taught its pupils. We will give some of these thoughts as a fitting conclusion to this little study on "Preparation for Martyrdom" as practised during the first two hundred and fifty years.

This Letter of Ignatius breathes in its nervous and impassioned words a complete fearlessness, though the awful trial lay immediately before him; it tells of an intense and impassioned desire on the part of the writer to be allowed to bear his witness to the love of Christ—to be permitted "to resist unto blood" (Heb. xii. 4). The whole of the short letter is, in fact, a passionate cry for martyrdom.

Ignatius wrote somewhat as follows:

"Dear Roman Congregation,—Do nothing which may hinder me from finishing my course. If *you* keep silence, God will speak through me." (He evidently feared that, through the intercession of powerful friends whom the great teacher knew he possessed in the capital, the death sentence might be postponed, possibly annulled.)

"Pray"—he wrote—"that I may have strength to do as well as to say. If only you will keep silence and leave me alone,—I am a word of God; but if you desire my life—then shall I be again a mere cry. It is good to get from the world unto God that I may rise unto Him.

"I would that all men should know that of my own free will, I die for God. . . . Let me be given to the wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread of God (or of Christ). Bear

with me. . . . Now am I beginning to be a disciple. . . . Come fire and cross and grapplings with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, hacking of limbs, crushings of my whole body. Come cruel tortures of the devil to assail me. Only be it mine to attain unto Jesus Christ! . . . Him I seek who died on our behalf. Him I desire who rose again for our sake. . . . Suffer me to receive the pure light: when I am come thither, then I shall be a man. Let me be an imitator of the Passion of my God . . ."

"I write unto you in the midst of life, yet lusting after death. My desire (or my love of life) has been crucified, there is (now) no fire of earthly longing in me but only water, living and speaking in me and saying within me, 'Come to the Father.' I have no delight in the food of corruption or in the delights of life. I desire the bread of God which is the flesh of Christ, . . . and for drink I desire His blood, which is love incorruptible."

. . . . . .

This was the new marvellous spirit in which the early Christian martyrs met and welcomed with a strange intense gladness, torture, ignominy, death. This was the spirit which the great pagan statesmen who sat at the helm of the Empire in Rome dreaded with a nameless dread, and longed to crush and to destroy, the new spirit which the wisest and most far-seeing among them felt was ever ringing the death-knell of the pagan cult, the cult they connected with the genesis, the power, and the very life of the Roman system, the cult which deified Rome and worshipped the genius of Rome's Emperor.

PART III

THE GREAT NUMBER OF MARTYRS IN THE FIRST TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS

Introductory

CONSIDERABLE stress has been laid in the preceding pages on the question of the duration of the periods of persecution and the consequent number of martyrs who suffered in these periods. It has commonly been assumed that after the death of Nero a lengthened period of quiet was enjoyed by the Church of Rome as in the provinces, and that the sect of Christians was generally left unmolested during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, and indeed of Domitian, until quite the last years of his life.

It has been shown that this was by no means the case, and that the Christians were harassed more or less all through this period of supposed quiet.

And after, through the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, the rapidly growing Christian community was perpetually persecuted by an unfriendly and suspicious government, often at the instigation of a jealous and hostile populace. Again and again these attacks, probably at first mostly local and partial, flamed out into a general and bitter persecution.

In the days of Antoninus Pius the harrying of Christians even grew more and more general and cruel, and when Marcus Antoninus became Emperor, the sufferings of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth became decidedly more acute and pronounced, and a terrible period of persecution set in and became the lot of the Christian subjects of Rome.

We have awful examples of this bitter "Antonine" persecution in the sad records, undoubtedly genuine, of the

martyrs of Vienne and Lyons, of the Scillitan martyrs in North Africa, of the heroic Mauritanian victims, in the striking and pathetic acts of Perpetua and her companions.[1]

Again it has been not unfrequently urged, and very largely believed, that the Christian traditions exaggerated the number of martyrs who suffered during the long though occasionally interrupted periods of persecution. As regards this early period, the first two centuries, the age we are now especially dwelling on, this supposition, very generally more or less accepted, is absolutely baseless. Indeed, the exact contrary is the case.

So far from exaggerating the numbers of confessors of "the Name," or painting in too vivid colours the story of their martyrdom, the earlier Christian writers dwell very little either on the number of the confessors or on their sufferings. It does not appear that any mention of martyrs or confessors of the second century appears in the oldest extant Church calendars; no allusion in these lists is recorded of martyrs until after the middle of the third century. Only in the case of some celebrated martyrs and confessors is an exception made. As a rule, save in very special cases, no anniversary of second-century martyrs appears to have been kept. It is only from the general tone of the earliest Christian writings[2] that we gather that the community was exposed to an ever-present danger, and that the shadow of persecution was ever brooding over the heads of the followers of "the Name."

By far the most definite account of the great numbers of Christians, the way in which they were looked upon by the imperial government, and the severe measures taken against them, are to be found in the notices of great pagan historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius, and more accurately and precisely in the Letter of Pliny to Trajan and in the

[1] Although the usual date given for this last attack on Christianity is a few months after the death of the Emperor Marcus. There is no doubt that they belong to the policy of persecution carried out by Marcus, and that the reaction in favour of Christianity noticeable in the reign of Commodus, his successor, had not had time to make itself felt.

[2] Compare the quotations taken from these writings given above.

Emperor's reply, on which we have already dwelt with some detail.

On the important and interesting question respecting the "number" of martyrs generally, one very weighty piece of evidence has been curiously neglected and ignored.

This evidence comes from the Catacombs, which have been in later years the subject of so much careful and painstaking research, a research that is still proceeding. In these investigations perhaps nothing has assisted the great scholars who have devoted themselves to the work, so much as the so-called "Itineraries" or "Pilgrim Guides" to this great network of subterranean cemeteries beneath the suburbs of Rome. In the fifth, sixth, and two following centuries we know that vast numbers of Pilgrims, not only from Italy but from distant countries, visited Rome, especially with the view of reverently visiting and praying at the shrines of the brave confessors of the Faith who suffered in the days of persecution, from the time of Nero to the accession of Constantine the Great to power.

To assist these pilgrim crowds, a certain number of "Itineraries" were composed. Some few of them have come down to us; these curious and interesting Pilgrim "Hand-Books" have been usually unearthed (in comparatively speaking modern times) in certain of the greater monastic libraries.[1]

They date from the last years of the fifth century onwards, and were written—the copies we possess—mostly in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. No doubt these "Itineraries" were copied from still older documents, and it is likely that more will be discovered. But these that we possess have been of incalculable service to the researches of men like Marchi, De Rossi, Marucchi, and their companions.

The information contained in these Pilgrim Guide-Books has been found to be in most cases singularly accurate, and the details set forth have been found most strikingly to correspond with what has been discovered. Not only have the more famous shrines alluded to been identified, but even the general details have been proved to have been largely

[1] A short account of the principal of these Itineraries is given on pp. 227–8.

correct. One detail, however, in these ancient "Pilgrim Itineraries" has not received the attention it deserved, and which in a most striking way confirms the point urged above, that the numbers of martyrs in Rome (for we are dwelling here especially on Rome) has been greatly underrated by most historians.

I

We will briefly glance through the testimony of the "Itineraries" on this point, touching upon each of the principal Catacombs in order. As a rule the "Pilgrim Itineraries" class the different groups of cemeteries (Catacombs) under the different heading of the Roman road in the immediate vicinity of which they were excavated. Thus cemeteries are classed together which are situated on the "Via Aurelia," the "Via Portuensis," the "Via Appia," the "Via Salaria Nova," etc. This topographical arrangement was drawn up evidently for the convenience of these pilgrim travellers, who were thus guided in turn round the principal shrines.

On the Right Bank of the Tiber in the Trastevere Quarter

The Via Vaticana. (*The Vatican Cemetery.*)

The allusion referred to here is to the crypts existing beneath the great basilica of S. Peter.—"No man knows what the number is of the holy martyrs who rest in this Church" (Etenim nullus hominum scit numerum sanctorum Martyrum qui in eadem ecclesia pausant).—*Itinerary of William of Malmesbury.*

This "Guide" was probably published for the use of the Crusaders. It was evidently made from a much older document, for many of the shrines alluded to in it belonged to Catacombs which in William of Malmesbury's time had been long forgotten.

The Via Aurelia. (*The road leading to Civita Vecchia.*)

After speaking of the shrines of certain celebrated confessors buried in a cemetery hard by this road, we

read how "these lie buried with many (other martyrs)" (cum multis sepulti jacent).—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

Of this "Itinerary," the full title of which is "De Locis SS. Martyrum quæ sunt foris civitatem Romæ,"—the MS. was found in the Salzburg Library.

THE VIA PORTUENSIS. (*The road leading to Portus, the ancient port of Rome, constructed by Claudius.*)

Certain famous shrines are particularised, after which follow the words: "Then you go down into a cave (or crypt), and you will find there an innumerable multitude of martyrs" (invenies ibi innumerabilem multitudinem martyrum); and again, alluding to another spot, "that cave (or crypt) is filled with the bones of martyrs."

The cemeteries on the Via Portuensis include the cemeteries of Pontianus and S. Felix.—*Salzburg Itinerary.*

CEMETERIES (CATACOMBS) ON LEFT BANK OF THE TIBER (ROME PROPER)

THE VIA OSTIENSIS. (*The road leading to Ostia.*)

After alluding to the sepulchre of S. Paul and other shrines, such as S. Adauctus, mention is made of a martyr Nomeseus, with many others (cum plurimis aliis).

THE VIA ARDEATINA. (*A road on the right or west of the Via Appia.*)

The "Guide" speaks of various shrines and proceeds to say: "Not far off lie S. Petronilla and Nereus and Achilles and many other martyrs."—*Itinerary of William of Malmesbury.*

THE VIA APPIA. (*The "Queen of Roads" leads through Albano on to Capua.*)

(1) After enumerating various notable shrines, such as that of S. Cecilia, we read: "There we come upon a countless multitude of martyrs" (Ibi innumerabilis multitudo martyrum).

(2) Further on, mention is made of "80 nameless martyrs who rest here."—*Salzburg Itinerary.*

(1) In another "Itinerary" describing the cemeteries

of the Appian Way we read of "800 martyrs who are stated to rest in the great Callistus group of Catacombs."

(2) And here again the expression is used, "with many martyrs."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

THE VIA LATINA (*leads out of the ancient Porta Capena to the left of the Appian Way*).

The "Itinerary" here referred to speaks of some three groups of cemeteries, in two of which, it states, after particularising some famous shrines, that "many martyrs rest there."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

THE VIA LABICANA (*leads out of the ancient Esquiline Gate*).

The "Pilgrim Guide" here referred to mentions that, in the group of cemeteries situate on this road, "many martyrs rest." In another place it alludes to "many other martyrs"; in another, "30 martyrs."—*Itinerary of Salzburg.*

Another "Pilgrim Guide" tells us of "a countless multitude of martyrs" buried in this group of Catacombs.—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

Another "Itinerary," after specifying some famous names, mentions that here were "other martyrs unnumbered."—*Itinerary of Einsiedeln.*

THE VIA TIBURTINA. (*The road which through the Tiburtina Gate, now the Porta S. Lorenzo, leads to Tivoli.*)

The "Guide" speaks of the Church of S. Laurence and the two basilicas in the cemetery adjacent. It says: "Many martyrs rest there"; and again, in the cemetery hard by, mentions "a multitude of saints" buried there.—*Itinerary of Salzburg.*

Another "Itinerary," describing these cemeteries, records that "with S. Cyriaca and S. Symphorosa are buried "many martyrs."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

THE VIA NOMENTANA (*leads out of the old Porta Collina to the town of Nomentum* (*Mentana*). *The modern Porta Pia is close to the old gate*).

After describing the group of cemeteries lying round the Basilica of S. Agnes, and mentioning some of the

better known saints, the "Itinerary" says: "Many others sleep there."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

THE VIA SALARIA NOVA (*leads in a northerly direction out of the old Porta Collina (Porta Pia now). The great Cemetery (Catacomb) of Priscilla is a little way out of the city on this road*).

The "Itinerary" is speaking of the old Basilica of S. Sylvester; its ruins are in the Priscilla Catacomb. There, it says, "a multitude of saints rest"; and further on, still speaking of the same Basilica of S. Sylvester, says that "under the altar with certain famous confessors there are a multitude of saints."—*Itinerary of Salzburg.*

Another "Guide," writing of the great ones who rest in the "Priscilla" Cemetery, adds how they sleep there "with many saints." Hard by, the same "Guide" tells us how one of the confessor-sons of S. Felicitas in the same spot rests "with many saints"; and again alludes to "the many martyrs buried there." And once more, speaking of the shrine of S. Sylvester, relates that "very many more saints and martyrs lie hard by." In one grave, the "Guide" adds, "373 are buried."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

William of Malmesbury, copying—as we said—from a much older "Pilgrim Guide," after enumerating the names of the more prominent martyrs, adds, "and there are innumerable other saints buried there" (alii innumerabiles).—*William of Malmesbury.*

THE VIA SALARIA VETUS. (*This road was in the immediate neighbourhood of the last mentioned, the "Via Salaria Nova."*)

The "Itinerary," describing the group of cemeteries on this road, writes, after mentioning the better known names of saints: "These are buried with many martyrs"; and further on relates how "230 martyrs are interred here."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

William of Malmesbury, writing of the same group, relates that "in the one grave 260 martyrs rest," and "in another 30."—*William of Malmesbury, Itinerary.*

THE VIA FLAMINIA. (*This ancient road leads out of the modern Porta del Popolo, is a direct continuation of the modern Corso. It is the great road communicating with North Italy.*)

There is only one Cemetery or Catacomb on this road, that of S. Valentinus. The "Guide" relates how the martyr S. Valentinus rests there together "with other martyrs unnamed."—*Itinerary of Salzburg.*

Another "Guide" says: "Many saints are buried here."—*De Locis SS. Martyrum.*

II

Of somewhat less weight than the testimony of the "Itineraries" or "Pilgrim Guide" books, but still of great importance as throwing a strong sidelight upon the evidence we have massed together on the subject of the large numbers of the martyrs and confessors of Rome interred in the Catacombs, are the Monza "Catalogue" and "Labels" once attached to the little phials of oil brought to Theodelinda from the sacred shrines of Rome.

We have elsewhere briefly described this curious and absolutely authentic relic.[1] Theodelinda asked for relics from the shrines of the Cemeteries (Catacombs) of Rome; Pope Gregory the Great in the last years of the sixth century sent to her a little of the oil from the lamps which in his days were ever kept burning before each of the shrines in question.

The original "Catalogue" (Notitia) of these oils, and the "Labels" (Pittacia) once attached to the phials which held the oils, are preserved in the Cathedral of Monza.

The "Catalogue" (or Notitia) is preceded by the following words:

"Nōt. de olea scōrum (sanctorum) martyrum qui Romæ in corpore requiescunt—id est," etc. Here follows the List of Martyrs from whose shrines a little of the oil (contained in the lamps always burning before them) was taken.

In several instances, notably after such names as S. Agnes, S. Cecilia, SS. Felix and Philippus and S. Cornelius, occur the following expressions:—

[1] See pp. 227–8.

"Et aliarum multarum Martyrum"—"et multa millia scorum"—(sanctorum) "et alii Sci (Sancti), id est CCLXII." . . . "in unum locum et alii CXXII. et alii Sci XLVI."—"et aliorum multi scor" (sanctorum).

In other words, the "Catalogue" and the "Labels" on the phials relate how the sacred oil was taken from lamps burning before the graves (the shrines) of S. Agnes and of "many other martyrs buried close by"; of S. Cornelius and "of many thousands of saints" resting in the immediate neighbourhood of his tomb; of S. Philippus and of "many other saints sleeping near his shrine," etc.

In three instances the exact numbers of the nameless martyrs are given, viz.: 262, 122, and 46. The expression "many thousands" which occurs in this venerable memorial of the reverent feeling of Christians of the sixth century towards the noble and devoted confessors of the Faith, is of course an exaggerated one; it may even be termed a rhetorical expression; but it bears its undoubted testimony to the deeply rooted belief of Christians who lived in the centuries which immediately followed the Peace of the Church, that in this sacred City of the Roman dead an enormous number of martyrs was buried, besides those whose names and stories were, as it were, household words in every land where Jesus Christ was adored.

III

There is a celebrated inscription of Pope Damasus (A.D. 366–84) preserved in one of the collections of the epitaphs he placed in the Catacombs (the Sylloge Palestina), an inscription originally placed in the Papal Crypt of the "Callistus" Cemetery, which speaks especially of "a number of martyrs buried together" near that sacred spot. The epitaph commences as follows:

> "Hic congesta jacet quæris si turba piorum
> Corpora sanctorum retinent veneranda sepulchra
> Sublimes animas rapuit sibi Regia cœli."[1]

[1] Allard translates these lines: "Si vous voulez savoir, ici reposént amoncelés les ossements d'un grand nombre des saints; ces venerables tombeaux gardent les corps des élus dont le royaume des cieux a tiré à lui

Prudentius (*Perist.* i. 73) (end of fourth century) beautifully alludes to the veil of oblivion which has fallen over the hidden graves of these numberless nameless martyrs :

> "O vetustatis silentis obsoleta oblivio
> Invidentur ista nobis, fama et ipsa extinguitur."

And again (*Perist.* ii.) :

> "Vix Fama nota est, abditis
> Quam plena sanctis Roma sit,
> Quam dives urbanum solum
> Sacri sepulchris floreat."

The martyrs traditionally interred in the various Catacombs of Rome, and whose graves were reverently and persistently visited by crowds of pilgrims to Rome from foreign lands after the Peace of the Church during the fourth, fifth, and following centuries, represent the victims of the various periods of persecution during the first three centuries.

It is by no means intended to press the traditional statements contained in the Pilgrim Itineraries quoted in this chapter respecting the vast number of martyrs interred in the Catacombs of Rome.

These statements are probably somewhat exaggerated, but the undisputed fact remains that a *very great number* of these victims of the various persecutions were certainly interred in this hallowed city of the dead ; and the unvarying tradition of the number of martyrs so interred must be taken into account, and gravely reckoned with, wherever the question of the number of Christian victims is considered.

les âmes sublimes." "Des polyandres, ou tombes consacrées à des centaines, peut-être à des milliers de corps, s'ouvraient en plusieurs parties des catacombes. Ces tombes étaient toujours anonymes, remplies de martyrs—'quorum nomina scit Omnipotens' selon l'expression du Pope Pascal." . . . "M. De Rossi croit reconnaitre dans une fosse profonde qui s'ouvre sous la niche profonde à gauche de l'autel dans la chapelle Papale . . . le polyandre célèbre où reposaient, selon d'anciens documents, une multitude innombrable de martyrs enterrés 'ad sanctam Cæciliam.'" (See Allard, *Rome Souteraine* (Northcote & Brownlow), *Cimetière de Calliste*, 216–18 ; and see too note on p. 218.)

BOOK IV

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

THE "COME AND DINE" OF THE LAST CHAPTER OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL—THE MYSTIC REPAST OF THE SEVEN DISCIPLES

CEMETERY OF CALLISTUS—II CENTURY. (A FAVOURITE PICTURE IN THE CATACOMBS)

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

Introductory

AN absolutely reliable source of information respecting the secret of the inner life of the Church in the early Christian centuries is the faithful record of the thoughts, the hopes, the aspirations of the congregations of the Church of the metropolis of the Empire, carved and painted on the countless graves of the subterranean corridors and chambers of the Catacombs of Rome.

"The popular, the actual belief of a generation or society of men cannot always be ascertained from the contemporary writers, who belong for the most part to another stratum. The belief of a people is something separate from the books or the watchwords of parties. It is in the air. It is in their intimate conversation. We must hear, especially in the case of the simple and unlearned, what they talk of to each other. We must sit by their bedsides, get at what gives them most consolation, what most occupies their last moments. This, whatever it be, is the belief of the people, right or wrong; this and this only, is their real religion. . . . Now, is it possible to ascertain this concerning the early Christians?

. . . . . .

"The books of that period are few and far between, and those books are for the most part the works of learned scholars rather than of popular writers. Can we, apart from these books, discover what was their most real and constant representation of their dearest hopes here and hereafter? Strange to say, after all this lapse of time (getting on for some two thousand years) it is possible; the answer, at any rate, for that large mass of Christians from all parts of the Empire that was collected in the capital, the answer is to be found in the Roman

Catacombs," [1]—that great city of the dead which lies beneath the soil of the immediate suburbs of imperial Rome. This city of the dead certainly contains several hundred miles of streets of tombs, and the tombs at least contain three or more millions of silent dwellers !

In this resting-place of the dead the community of Rome, by far the greatest of the Christian churches who professed the faith of Jesus, for some two centuries and a half reverently laid their dear ones as they passed from the stir of busy restless Roman life into the unseen world. There in these Catacombs they used to pray often, very often in the years of persecution ; there they used to hear the teaching of Duty, of Hope and Faith from the lips of some chosen master, and it is from the words written orgraven upon the innumerable tombs in the Catacombs that we gather what was the real belief of these early congregations—what their sure hopes and aspirations. In these silent streets, on the walls of the countless sepulchral chambers, they loved to paint pictures and to grave short epitaphs telling of these same cherished hopes. Some of these pictures and epitaphs, often dim and discoloured, often mutilated, are with us still. Not a few of the artists who worked there were evidently men of no mean power in their noble craft.

Ruined, desecrated, spoiled though it now is, with only comparatively small portions accessible at all—what a treasure-house for the scholar is this silent group of cemeteries !

A careful study of the more recent discoveries in the Catacombs throws much light on the opinions and thoughts of the Christians of the first and second centuries, showing us that the current of early Christian thought not unfrequently ran in a somewhat different channel to the stream of thoughts presented to us by the contemporary writers of that very early period. It must, however, be insisted on that the cardinal doctrines of the Faith taught by the weightiest of the first Christian writers were absolutely identical with the belief of the Christians of the Roman Catacombs. If anything, the supreme divinity of the Son of God—His love for, His care for men, is emphasised more emphatically, if it be possible, in the silent teaching than in the fervid dogmatism of the great Catholic writers.

[1] Dean Stanley of Westminster.

To enable the reader fairly to grasp something of the vast extent, the nature, and importance of these Catacombs of Rome, whose silent witness to the " Inner Life " of the early Church is invoked, this Fourth Book will give: (1) a brief description of the way in which the investigations into this wonderful " City of the Dead " in later years has been carried out by careful scholars and experts ; (2) a general and somewhat detailed account of the situation and features of the several Catacombs, dwelling especially on the more important of these cemeteries ; (3) the teaching contained in the inscriptions, carvings, and paintings on the graves in the Catacomb corridors.

PART I

I

SINCE the date of what may be termed the rediscovery of the Catacombs in the vineyard on the Via Salaria in 1578 [1] the work of excavation and research in the streets of the City of the Dead which lies beneath the suburbs of Rome has been slowly and somewhat fitfully carried on, exciting generally but little public interest, and until the last fifty years, roughly speaking, has been most mischievous and destructive.

It is probable that more destruction and havoc have been wrought by the well-meaning but ill-directed efforts of the explorer than were occasioned by the raids of the barbarians in the sixth and two following centuries and by the slow wear and sap of time.

Among these, Bosio, A.D. 1593–1629, the pioneer of the Catacomb explorers, occupies one of the few honourable places; his method of working was in many respects scientific. He was no mere explorer, working haphazard, but he guided his labours by carefully sifting all the information he could procure of the past history of the vast subterranean necropolis. But, after all, the materials of this history which

[1] It was in the year of grace 1578 that some workmen digging out sand in a vineyard about a mile from Rome on the Via Salaria came upon the gallery of a subterranean cemetery, with dim paintings and many ancient inscriptions upon the walls.

This striking discovery excited much curiosity at the time, and the world of Rome, recalling to mind the long-forgotten story of the Catacombs, became suddenly conscious that beneath its suburbs lay a vast unexplored City of the Dead.

he could get together were scanty when compared with the materials possessed by scholars of our day and time, and in consequence many of the conclusions to which this pioneer of Catacomb research came to were erroneous.

But in his manner of working Bosio had no successors. As a rule, since that really illustrious scholar and searcher has passed away, alas ! a very different method has been with rare exceptions followed by explorers of the Catacombs, and owing to the careless and ill-regulated excavations which have been fitfully carried on during some 200 and more years, irreparable damage has been done, and the losses to this deeply important branch of early Christian history are simply incalculable.

The general results of this unfortunate exploration work in the past have been summarised as follows :

During this long period—roughly from A.D. 1629 to about the middle of the nineteenth century, some 220 years—*the chief object and aim of Catacomb exploration were to procure relics* ; when these were once carried away, no heed was paid to the crypts, or to the streets of graves. The records of the excavations kept were scanty and utterly insignificant, and each Catacomb from which the relics were taken was left in a state of utter ruin and deplorable confusion. The result of these searchings of 220 years has been that few discoveries were made of any real importance to early Christian history or archæology. At last De Rossi, in the middle years of the nineteenth century, took in hand seriously the study and scientific exploration of the vast Christian necropolis of Rome.

De Rossi was the friend and pupil of Father Marchi, an indefatigable student of the Catacombs who was really impressed with the possibilities of a more careful exploration than had hitherto been undertaken. Marchi's real title to honour will ever be that he imbued his pupil with a passionate love of the work to which he has devoted a long and strenuous life.

The great City of the Dead, largely thanks to De Rossi's lifelong labours, is to us something far more than a vast museum of inscriptions and memorials, the work of the Christian congregations in Rome during the first two and a half

centuries which followed the preaching and martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul. It is true that most important is the testimony of these precious relics to the earliest popular estimate of Christianity: we shall dwell later on the wonderful witness which the numberless inscriptions and strange emblems painted and graven on the tombs bear to the faith and belief of the early Church; but the eminent Roman scholar of whom we are speaking has taught us that there was more than even the witness of these precious inscriptions and emblems to be gathered from a patient study of the Catacomb secret.

De Rossi believed, and the splendid results of his long toil have strikingly verified his belief, that amidst the ruined and desolated streets of graves the *historic crypts* of the more famous and illustrious martyrs of Christ, of the men and women who during the first two centuries and a half through pain and agony passed to their rest and won their crowns, could be found and identified, and that thus a new and striking proof would be furnished of the truth of much of the martyr story of the early Church.

The official records of well-nigh all the Roman martyrdoms of the age of persecution, we know, were destroyed by the imperial government in the days of Diocletian. The martyrologies or histories of these heroes and heroines of the faith of Jesus which have come down to us, it is well known, were with a few notable exceptions for the most part largely composed some two or even more centuries *after* the events they relate had happened, and have in consequence been treated by careful Christian scholars as not dependable sources of early Christian history; this has been conceded by the most scholarly of the devout Christian students.

De Rossi's great work, however, strange to say, has curiously rehabilitated very many of these long-discredited martyr stories,[1] and has clearly shown us that not a few of the more important of these have been absolutely founded on fact; of course, some of the various details as recounted in these martyrologies are more or less legendary, but the great cardinal fact of the existence, of the life-work and suffering,

[1] Refer here to pp. 289–297, "Crypt of S. Cecilia."

and noble testimony to the faith sealed with their life-blood, of these true servants of the adored Master, is positively established by what has been found in the last fifty years in the Roman city of the Christian dead.

De Rossi and his companions have indeed given us a perfectly new and most striking page in the history of this early Christian Church.

II

It will be of special interest briefly to glance over the principal portion of the materials which De Rossi made use of as his guide during his long forty years' labours in the exploration of the Catacombs. First in order must be taken what may be termed the literature bearing on the City of the Dead.

The most important of these pieces are

1. *The Acts of the Martyrs.* These have already been alluded to as possessing, save in a few instances, little historic authority, as they were mostly composed two centuries or even more after the events which they purported to relate happened. But they were not without their value to the Catacomb explorers, for it must be remembered that when these "Acts" were put together in the form we now possess them, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, the Catacombs were still an object of eager pilgrimage from all lands, and many of the details in these "Acts" evidently were based on an historical tradition, such as the place exactly where the martyr of the "Acts" was buried; such a detail, for instance, served as a guide to the explorer.

2. *The Martyrology of S. Jerome*—a compilation dating from about the middle of the sixth century, but certainly containing memoranda of an earlier date.

3. The (so-called) *Liber Pontificalis*—a generally reliable and most interesting work, the earlier portion of which has been largely used throughout Western Christendom, certainly since the sixth century. The first part of this work contains biographical notices of the Bishops of Rome from the days of S. Peter to the times of Pope Nicholas, A.D. 807. The earliest redaction of the first Papal notices in the *Liber Pontificalis*

which has come down to us was made towards the end of the fifth century, or in the first years of the sixth. But it is evidently based on records of a much older date preserved in the Roman Church.

4. But what De Rossi found most valuable for the purposes of his great work was a group of writings known as *Itineraries of Pilgrims*. These were founded on hand-books composed for the use of devout pilgrims from Britain, Gaul, Spain, Germany, and Switzerland,—men and women who were desirous to see and to pay their devotions at the celebrated shrines of Rome.

Some five at least of these precious Pilgrim Itineraries or Guide-Books to the more celebrated shrines or places where martyrs were interred in the vast Roman City of the Dead have come down to us. They have proved of the highest value to De Rossi in his exploration work. The first perhaps in value of these is contained in the works of William of Malmesbury, which treat of the doings of the Crusaders in Rome. William of Malmesbury wrote in the year of grace 1095. But the Itinerary section in question speaks of the martyr saints as though they were *still resting* in their Catacomb graves, although we know that they had been translated into churches in the city about three centuries earlier. This clearly shows that the " Itinerary " section had been written several centuries before the writer William of Malmesbury lived and copied it into his work.

Other Pilgrim Itineraries have been found in famous monastic libraries, such as in the libraries of Einsiedeln and Salzburg. These may be roughly dated about the middle of the seventh century,—that is, before the days of the Pontificate of Paul I, A.D. 757, and Paschal I, A.D. 817, when the wholesale translation of the remains of the martyrs from the Catacombs to the securer shelter of the city churches took place. These were therefore written in a period when the traditions connected with the historic crypts and their venerated contents were all comparatively fresh and vivid.

In the same category with the Pilgrim Itineraries which the great Roman scholar has found so helpful in his Catacomb researches must be placed the celebrated papyrus preserved

in the Cathedral of Monza. This is a contemporary catalogue or list of the sacred oils sent by Pope Gregory the Great (A.D. 590–604) to Theodelinda, Queen of the Lombards. The Lombard Queen sent a special messenger, one Abbot John, to Pope Gregory the Great asking him for relics of the saints buried in the Catacombs. At that period no portions of the sacred bodies were allowed to be removed, even at the request of so powerful a petitioner as Theodelinda ; but as a substitute the Pope sent a little of the oil which fed the lamps which were ever kept burning before the tombs or shrines of the saints in question.

Each phial containing the oil was carefully ticketed or labelled, and a list of these tickets or labels was written on this Monza papyrus. Some sixty or seventy saints' shrines are specially enumerated, besides about eight places mentioned before which oils were kept burning, before tombs which contained a crowd of unnamed saints and martyrs.

This Monza catalogue of the sacred oils De Rossi carefully compared with the topographical notices in the Pilgrim Itineraries above referred to. It was of great service to the scholar explorer in discovering and identifying many of the principal sanctuaries of the Catacombs.

Another and quite a different material for his investigations De Rossi found amidst the desolate Catacombs themselves : he noticed that certain unmistakable indications ever marked the near neighbourhood of some historic crypt.

1. The existence above ground of more or less ruined basilicas of various dimensions,—in some cases showing the remains of a considerable building, in others of a comparatively small edifice as of a chapel or an oratory. Such a ruined building evidently pointed to there being beneath the soil, at times deep down, an historic crypt of importance. Such a small basilica or oratory had no doubt been built after the Peace of the Church in the middle or latter years of the fourth or in the fifth century, when pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints and martyrs had become the fashion. It was intended to accommodate the ever-growing crowds who came often from distant countries to pray near and to venerate the saints and martyrs whose remains lay buried in the crypt immediately beneath.

2. The remains, more or less perfect, of a staircase or staircases leading down to the sacred crypt containing a tomb of some great confessor known and honoured in the tradition of the Church.

3. The presence of a "luminare" or shaft, sometimes of considerable size, which was constructed to give light and air to a subterranean chamber in the Catacombs, indicated that in the immediate neighbourhood of the "luminare" an historic crypt had once existed. These openings or shafts were mostly the work of Pope Damasus and his successors in the latter years of the fourth and in the earlier years of the fifth centuries.

4. Below—in some of the ruined corridors of tombs and in certain of the cubicula or separate chambers leading out of the corridors—on the walls a number of "graffiti" or inscriptions, often very rudely graved or painted, are visible, some of the inscriptions or questions being simply a name, others containing a brief prayer for the writer or for one dear to the writer. It was evident that the presence of such inscriptions indicated the immediate neighbourhood of an historic crypt which once contained the remains of a revered "great one,"—not unfrequently the name of the "great one" was included in some of the graffiti.

Such "graffiti" were clearly the work of the many pilgrims to the Catacombs in the fifth and following centuries.

5. In certain of the cubicula or separate chambers leading out of the corridors, remains of paintings, evidently of a period much later than the original Catacomb work, are discernible —paintings which belong to the Byzantine rather than to any classical school of art, and which cannot be dated earlier than the sixth or seventh centuries. The existence of such later decorative work clearly indicated that the spot so adorned was one of traditional sanctity, and no doubt had been the resting-place of a venerated saint and martyr.

6. In his "materials" for the identification of the historic crypts De Rossi found the inscriptions of Pope Damasus, who died A.D. 384, of the greatest assistance.

Damasus' love for and work in the Catacombs is well known. He was a considerable poet, and precious fragments of poetical inscriptions composed by him have been found

in many of the more important Catacombs which have been explored. These inscriptions were engraved on marble tablets by his friend and skilful artist Furius Dionysius Filocalus in clear beautiful characters. These fragments have been in many cases put together, and where the broken pieces were wanting have been wonderfully restored with the aid of "syllogæ" or collections of early Christian inscriptions gathered mostly in the ninth century by the industry of the monks. These "syllogæ" or collections have preserved for us some forty of the inscriptions of Pope Damasus in honour of martyrs and confessors buried in the Catacombs. With perhaps one solitary exception, they are all written in hexameter verse.

Such collections of early Christian inscriptions have been preserved in the libraries of such monasteries as Einsiedeln, S. Riquier, S. Gall, etc.

The result of the forty years of De Rossi's researches and work in the Catacombs, based on the above-mentioned historical documents and on the evidence derived from what he found in the ruined corridors of tombs and the chambers leading out of them, has been that, whereas before his time at most three important historical crypts were known, now already more than fifteen [1] of these have been clearly identified, a wonderful and striking proof of the reality of the sufferings and constancy of the heroes and heroines of the faith in the first two hundred and fifty years of the existence of the religion of Jesus—sufferings and constancy which resulted in the final triumph of Christianity.

Briefly to enumerate just a very few of the more prominent later historical discoveries which have lifted much of the early history and inner life of the great Church of the Roman congregations from the domain of tradition into the realm of scientific history—

In the first century—the discoveries in the cemeteries of Domitilla and Priscilla. The long-disputed story of Nereus and Achilles; the existence and fate of the two Domitillas, kinswomen of the imperial house; the Christianity and

[1] Several additional discoveries of historic crypts have been made since this computation was made.

martyrdom of the patrician Acilius Glabrio the Consul, have been largely authenticated.

In the second century—the discovery of the tombs of SS. Felicitas and Cecilia, of the grave of S. Januarius, the eldest son of Felicitas,[1] substantiate the existence and death of the famous martyrs, whose very existence has been doubted even by earnest Christian students, and whose life-story has been generally relegated to the sphere of religious romance.

In the early years of the third century—the wonderful "find" of the Papal Crypt in the Callistus Cemetery, and the ruined remains of the tombs of several of the Bishops of Rome, confessors and martyrs, bear irrefragable testimony to the truth of records of early Christian history, and set a seal upon tradition hitherto only held with but a half-hearted confidence. In the middle years of the same century the identification of the tombs of Agnes and her foster-sister Emerentiana re-placed in the pages of serious history scenes often quoted in early martyrology, but which competent Christian critics had long relegated to the region of the merely legendary. The exploration and labours of De Rossi and his band of fellow-workers and pupils have also thrown a flood of light on the days of the fierce continuous persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, and have opened out to publicity a number of tombs of nameless martyrs who suffered under the iron hand of imperial Rome in the bloody times of that last and fiercest of attacks on Christianity. And besides the many nameless graves of a great multitude of martyrs and confessors who suffered under Diocletian, these explorations have identified the tombs of not a few of the more famous Christian leaders who witnessed a good confession at that same dread epoch, notably the resting-places of Peter and Marcellinus, of the Roman bishops Caius and Eusebius, of Marcus and Marcellinus. "A very glorious group of monuments—a group, too, which we may well expect to become larger and more far-reaching in its teaching, for *innumerable crypts are still waiting to be explored and searched out.* Each

[1] Other tombs of the famous martyr-sons of Felicitas have since been identified, and much knowledge of this incident in early Christian history has been brought to light.

of the ancient roads leading from the immemorial capital of Italy, and once of the world; each historic cemetery or catacomb contains such a crypt with its central shrine of some once well-known martyr or illustrious confessor of the Name."

So writes Marucchi, one of the foremost of the living Roman scholars in Catacomb lore, the disciple and successor of De Rossi. (These words were written in the year of grace 1903.)

Following closely upon the notices contained in the Pilgrim Itineraries of the seventh and eighth centuries, De Rossi, in a catalogue carefully composed, enumerates thirty-seven cemeteries or Catacombs. Several, however, of these have not been clearly identified. One or two of them are very small; while others, apparently extending over a wide area, communicate with one another; and some are very imperfectly known, others as yet quite unexplored

III

It will be an assistance to the student wishing to grasp something of the vast extent of the great subterranean City of the Dead, and desirous to arrive at some idea of the present knowledge of the mighty Christian necropolis of the first days, if a brief sketch of the known cemeteries and their more important crypts is presented.

The sketch will deal with each of the "Viæ" or public roads leading out of Rome, in the immediate neighbourhood of which the different cemeteries or Catacombs have been excavated,—each public road having its own special group of cemeteries, lying hard by beneath the vineyards or gardens abutting on the road.

The Vatican Hill

Naturally, the cemetery on the Vatican Hill, which includes the tomb of S. Peter, must be mentioned first. The whole district of the Vatican in the days of Nero (middle years of the first century of the Christian era) was covered with gardens and villas; it communicated directly with the city by

means of the Pons Triumphalis, afterwards termed the Pons Neronianus, and was traversed by the Via Triumphalis and the Via Cornelia. Between these two roads the Apostle S. Peter was buried. The Pilgrim Itineraries describe the sacred tomb now as "juxta viam Corneliam"—now as "juxta viam Triumphalem." Directly over the apostle's tomb[1] Anacletus, the Bishop of Rome, third in succession, erected a "Memoria" or little chapel. This "Memoria" or Chapel of Anacletus grew into the lordly basilica known subsequently as S. Peter's at Rome.

The tomb in question is situated close by the spot where without doubt the apostle suffered martyrdom in the year of grace 67. Around the tomb of S. Peter, as we shall see, were buried the nine or ten first Bishops or Popes of Rome, as well as other nameless saints once famous in the early years of the story of the Roman congregations.

It is doubtful if there was ever a Catacomb, as we understand the term, on the Vatican Hill. No trace of subterranean corridors, or of chambers leading out of the corridors, have been found; only, it must be remembered that the neighbourhood of the tomb of S. Peter and the early Bishops of Rome has been completely changed owing to the excavations necessary for the foundations of the great basilica erected over the little Memoria of Anacletus by Constantine the Great in the first half of the fourth century.

The Via Aurelia

The Via Aurelia Vetus was probably originally laid out by C. Aurelius, Censor in the year of grace 512. It started from the Janiculum (the modern Gate of S. Pancras) and led directly towards the sea-board. It was the road from Rome to Centumcellæ (Civita Vecchia).

The cemeteries along the Via Aurelia have been as yet very

[1] The tomb of S. Peter and its surroundings will be described at length in Appendix II., which follows the section treating of the "Catacombs," where is related the thrilling story of what was discovered when the excavations required for the support of the great bronze canopy of Bernini over the tomb of S. Peter were made in A.D. 1626, in the pontificate of Urban VIII. (Appendix II., S. Peter, pp. 279–88.)

imperfectly explored.[1] The ancient Pilgrim Itineraries mention four distinct cemeteries here. (1) That of SS. Processus and Martinianus, first century. (2) S. Calepodius or S. Callistus, third century. (3) S. Pancratius, fourth century. (4) The two Felixes, fourth century.

Cemetery of SS. Processus and Martinianus.—(Apostolic age.) Tradition relates that these saints were the gaolers of S. Peter, and owed their conversion to their prisoner. They suffered martyrdom shortly after S. Peter's death, being decapitated on the Via Aurelia; Lucina, a wealthy Roman matron, buried them in her garden near the place of their martyrdom. This Lucina was probably the same who gave her name to the ancient cemetery on the Via Appia, and which now forms part of the great network of cemeteries known generally as S. Callistus' Catacomb.

Very little is known of this Catacomb. Among the network of sepulchral corridors on this portion of the Via Aurelia this special cemetery has not as yet been clearly identified.

These cemeteries are in a sadly ruined condition. The loculi which have been examined are evidently of a very early period. Marucchi, in pleading for a more detailed exploration here, suggests the probability of some "Memories" of S. Peter being eventually discovered.

Cemetery of S. Calepodius.—This saint appears to have been a priest who suffered martyrdom, probably in a popular rising, in the reign of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222–35). This cemetery is principally famous as being the resting-place of Pope Callistus, who also suffered in a popular rising, A.D. 222, and was laid to rest in this cemetery, perhaps as being nearer to the scene of his martyrdom than the official Papal Crypt on the Via Appia to which he gave his name. The exploration work here, as far as it has gone, has been carried out with difficulty owing to the ruinous state of the corridors.

Cemetery of S. Pancratius.—S. Pancras was a boy-martyr twelve, or as some accounts give fourteen years of age when in A.D. 304 he suffered for his faith in the Diocletian persecution.

This cemetery was in the first instance known under the name of Octavilla, a Christian matron who buried the young

[1] Marucchi, *Itineraries*, A.D. 1903.

confessor in her garden on the Aurelian Way. It had probably been a cemetery before the deposition of the remains of the famous boy-martyr gave it a new name and not a little celebrity.

The story of S. Pancras has ever been an attractive one, and a certain number of churches named in his honour are scattered over many lands. A small basilica was built over the crypt containing his grave. Pope Siricius (end of fourth century) restored and adorned it. Honorius I, A.D. 620, rebuilt it. In the present Church of S. Pancras there are scarcely any traces of the original basilica. The remains of the martyr have disappeared. Strange to say, in the great translation of the ashes of saints and martyrs by Pope Paul I and Paschal I, S. Pancras was left undisturbed in his tomb. The corridors, however, have been completely wrecked, and have been very partially explored.

The site of the cemeteries mentioned in the Pilgrim Itineraries, named after two saints each bearing the name of Felix, has not been discovered.

THE VIA PORTUENSIS

This road leads from the old Porta Navalis in the Trastevere, the city "across the Tiber," direct to Portus the port of Rome, a construction of Claudius when Ostia (Centumcellæ) was unable to cope with the commerce of the capital. Three cemeteries, according to the ancient Itineraries, were excavated on the Via Portuensis. That of Pontianus, the best known of the three, where lie the remains of SS. Abdon and Sennen ; and a second, nearly five miles from the city, the Catacomb of Generosa. There is a third, the Cemetery of S. Felix, the position of which has not yet been discovered.

The Cemetery of Pontianus.—Pontianus was a wealthy Christian of the Trastevere quarter, who used in the second century—probably in the latter years of the century—to gather his fellow-Christians to prayer and teaching in his house. The cemetery which bears his name was originally excavated in one of his gardens. The old Pilgrim Itineraries speak of there being a vast number of martyrs in this Catacomb—"innumerabilis multitudo Martyrum." Several of these are

named ; the most notable, however, are the two noble Persians, Abdon and Sennen, who, visiting Rome at the time of the persecution of Decius, suffered for their faith.

In this Catacomb there is a well-known ancient baptistery of considerable size, which was richly decorated in the sixth century. Such baptisteries have been found in other Catacombs, notably in that of S. Priscilla, a very ancient and vast cemetery which will be described with some detail later.

The remains of the more famous martyrs were removed into the city at the period of the great translation of sacred bodies in the ninth century, after which date this cemetery ceased to be visited. It has only been partially explored.

The Cemetery of S. Felix mentioned in the Itineraries is completely unknown as yet.

The Cemetery of Generosa, on the road to Porta, is not alluded to in the Pilgrim Guides, no doubt owing to its distance —some five miles—from the city. Lanciani gives a vivid description of its story and of its discovery in 1867. It is of small extent, and apparently was excavated in the persecution of Diocletian, *circa* A.D. 303, in what was once a sacred grove belonging to the College of the Arval Brothers, but which had been abandoned, probably after the dissolution of the Brotherhood, which is supposed to have taken place about the middle of the third century.

IV

The Via Ostiensis

The *Via Ostiensis,* on the city side of the Tiber, one of the principal roads of the Empire, begins at the ancient Porta Ostiensis, known from the sixth century onwards as the Porta S. Pauli, and leads to the old harbour of Ostia. The Pilgrim Itineraries enumerate three cemeteries as situated hard by this road—the tomb of the Apostle S. Paul with the little Cemetery of Lucina, the Cemetery of Commodilla, and that of S. Theckla.

(1) According to a very general tradition, S. Paul suffered martyrdom, A.D. 67, and his body was laid in a tomb on the Ostian Way in a garden belonging to a Christian lady named Lucina,—some identify her with the " Lucina " of the Cemetery

of Callistus on the Appian Way. There it rested, according to the most recent investigations, until the persecution and confiscation of the cemeteries in A.D. 258, when for security's sake it was secretly removed at the same time as the body of S. Peter was brought from the grave on the Vatican Hill. The sacred remains of the two apostles were laid in the " Platonia " Crypt, in what was subsequently known as the Catacomb of S. Sebastian, on the Via Appia ; and probably after an interval of some two years, when the cemeteries were restored to the Christian congregations by the Emperor Gallerius, the bodies of the two apostles were brought back again to their original resting-places.

Anacletus, the third in succession of the Roman bishops, erected in the first century a small " Memoria " or chapel over the tomb of S. Paul, like the one he built over the tomb of S. Peter on the Vatican Hill.

In the year 324–5 the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, over the apostle's tomb and little " Memoria," caused the first important basilica, known as S. Paul's, to be erected ; the Emperor treated the loculus or sarcophagus of S. Paul in the same manner as he had treated the sarcophagus of S. Peter, enclosing it in a solid bronze coffin, on which he laid a cross of gold. When the basilica was rebuilt, after the fire of A.D. 1813, a marble slab, which apparently was a part of the vaulted roof of the original sepulchral chamber of the apostle, came to light. On this slab, or rather slabs of marble, which now lie directly under the altar, are engraved the simple words *Pavlo Apostolo Mart* : the inscription evidently dating from the days of Constantine (A.D. 324–5). No further investigation of the tomb was permitted. It is believed that the bronze sarcophagus with its sacred contents, with the golden cross, lie immediately under the solid masonry upon which the slab of marble we have been speaking of rests.

On the slab of marble in question, besides the simple inscription above quoted, are three apertures : the most important of these is circular ; it is, in fact, a little well, and is 23½ inches in depth, and was no doubt originally what is termed the " billicum confessionis," through which handkerchiefs and other objects were lowered, so as to be hallowed

by resting for a brief space on the sarcophagus when access to the vault itself was not permitted. The other two apertures or little wells are only 12½ and 8 inches deep respectively. It is not known for what purpose these two were intended.

The history of the famous basilica is as follows. Lanciani writes how "wonder has been manifested at the behaviour of Constantine the Great towards S. Paul, whose basilica at the second milestone of the Via Ostiensis appears like a pigmy structure in comparison with that which he erected over the tomb of S. Peter. Constantine had no intention of placing S. Paul in an inferior rank, or of showing less honour to his memory." In his original design which he carried out, the high road to Ostia ran close by the grave; thus the space at his disposal was limited. But before the fourth century had run out it was imperatively felt that the Church of S. Paul ought to be equal in size and beauty to that on the Vatican Hill: so, in rebuilding the basilica the original plan was changed by the Emperor Valentinian II., in A.D. 386. The tomb and the altar above it were left undisturbed, a great arch was raised above the altar, and westwards from that point, in the direction of the Tiber, a vast church was built. The great work was continued by Theodosius and completed by Honorius, and the splendid decorative work finally carried out by Honorius' sister, the famous Placidia, who died in A.D. 450. Certain Popes, notably Gregory the Great, and later Honorius III, in A.D. 1226, added to the decorations of Placidia.

There was evidently in very early times a cemetery around the crypt which contained the body of S. Paul; this was the original Cemetery of Lucina. But it has been disturbed by the subsequent erection of the Basilica of Constantine, and later by the far larger church begun under Valentinian II. It is hoped that a future careful exploration of the cemetery will bring to light much that is at present unknown.

(2) *Cemetery of Commodilla*—is situated on the left of the Via Ostiensis on the road of the Seven Churches. Commodilla was evidently a wealthy Roman lady who, like many other Christians of position and means, gave up her garden

to the Christian dead. Nothing, however, is known of her history.

Two martyrs, SS. Felix and Adauctus, once well known in Christian story, were interred here. They belong to the time of Diocletian. This Catacomb, apparently of considerable extent, is only very imperfectly known. The Martyrologies mention other "confessors" buried here, but the corridors are either earthed up or are in a state of ruin and confusion, and any thorough investigation would be a costly and difficult piece of work.

(3) *Cemetery of S. Thekla.*—Nothing is known of the martyr who has given her name to this Catacomb; who must not, however, be confounded with the celebrated saint of the same name who belongs to Lycaonia, and is traditionally connected with S. Paul. This cemetery has been but imperfectly examined as yet; its extent is unknown.

The Via Ardeatina

The Via Ardeatina lies a little distance to the right of the Via Appia, from which it branches off close to the Church of "Domine quo vadis," the traditional scene of the appearance of the Lord to S. Peter. In the immediate neighbourhood of the Via Ardeatina and the Via Appia lie, roughly speaking scarcely two miles from the city, the wonderful group of cemeteries generally known under the names of Domitilla and Callistus. These include the Cemetery of Lucina—really an area of Callistus, the Cemeteries of SS. Marcus and Balbinus and also that of S. Soteris. This enormous network of subterranean corridors, chambers, and chapels are all more or less united by passages and corridors (though this is not quite certain); but much is as yet unexplored, and the lines of demarcation between the several Catacombs uncertain. Recent careful investigations of De Rossi, Armellini, Marucchi, and others less known have, however, led to the discovery of certain great and notable historic crypts, centres round which the network of corridors are grouped. These identifications have thrown a flood of light upon the very early history of the numerous and influential Roman congregations; much that

was supposed to be purely legendary and fabulous has passed, as we have observed, into the domain of real history. Very briefly we will touch on a few of the more remarkable "finds."

Cemetery of Domitilla.—The famous group of Catacombs known under this general title—perhaps with the sole exception of the Cemetery of S. Priscilla and the Cemetery of S. Callistus, hereafter to be described, is the vastest of all the Catacombs; and with the exceptions just alluded to, in some of its areas, the oldest in point of date.

Much of this great cemetery dates from the time of men who knew the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Its *grandeur.*—It was the burying-place of certain Christian members of the imperial house of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian in the days of their power, and it tells us with no uncertain voice that in the ranks of the Christian congregation of Rome in the very first days were members drawn from the highest ranks of the proudest aristocracy of the world, and who did not shrink from sharing the same seats in the Christian prayer homes with the slave and the little trader.

Writing of the Domitilla Cemetery in 1903, Marucchi does not hesitate to style it perhaps the most important of all the Catacombs; but, "alas!" he goes on to say, "it has been terribly ravaged by comparatively modern explorers." These destructive explorations have sadly affected the importance which the Catacomb and its several divisions, or areas, would have possessed as a great monument of very early Christian history, had these recent excavations been carried out with due care and reverence.

Roughly, the Cemetery of Domitilla is composed of three distinct divisions or areas. The first, the work of the first and second centuries. In this area there are several famous historical centres, *e.g.* the tombs of the two saints Nereus and Achilles, and of the once famous S. Petronilla, and the well-known entrance or vestibule which opens on the Via Ardeatina, and the Chapel or Chamber of Ampliatus. The second area is the work of the third century, and the third dates from the last years of the third and the first quarter of the fourth. These areas have been connected with corridors

ENTRANCE TO THE CEMETERY OF S. DOMITILLA—(CRYPT OF THE FLAVIANS) CENTURY I

of different periods in the second, third, and fourth centuries ; the whole network is of very great extent.

At the end of the sixth century, in the Pontificate of Siricius, great damage was occasioned to much of the earlier part of the cemetery by the construction of the Basilica of S. Petronilla, a building which also bears the names of Nereus and Achilles.

The fame of these early martyrs and the number of pilgrims to their shrines in the closing years of the fourth century, induced Pope Siricius—regardless of the mischief which such a work would occasion to the many unknown graves of an early period—to build a somewhat large church or basilica over the tombs of SS. Nereus and Achilles and S. Petronilla. The position of the tombs of these two saints has been ascertained ; the grave of Petronilla has also been localized with fair certainty. The high altar of the fourth-century basilica was placed over the graves of the two martyrs ; the remains of Petronilla lay in a chamber behind the apse of the basilica ; without, of course, maintaining the accuracy of the details of the sixth-century martyrology of Nereus and Achilles, the discoveries in the Cemetery of Domitilla have established the fact of the existence of these two traditional saints and martyrs. Scholars recognize now that much of the sixth-century martyrology was founded upon dependable tradition.

The much disputed tradition of Petronilla, the wanderings of her body, and the question whether or not she was the daughter of S. Peter, is discussed in Appendix I., p. 277, where the story of her tomb is told at some length.

The crypt of Ampliatus—another of the historic centres of this great catacomb, is situated in the middle of the area or district originally occupied by the tombs of the Christian members of the Imperial Flavian House. The decorations of the sepulchral chambers here and the style of inscriptions belong to the first century and first half of the second.

In one of the carefully decorated crypts of the Flavian family is an arched tomb with the word " Ampliatus " graven on marble in characters which belong to a very early period. De Rossi, after examining the question at some length, concludes that this grave can be with very high probability

considered to be the sleeping-place of the remains of the Ampliatus loved of S. Paul (Rom. xvi. 8). The name is clearly that of a slave or freedman; subsequently the name (Ampliatus) became the recognized surname of the various members of the family and their descendants. It seems strange on first thoughts that one of servile rank should occupy a tomb of considerable importance in the very heart of a Christian cemetery belonging to so great a House. This is no doubt explained by the fact that this Ampliatus occupied some very distinguished position in the early Christian community at Rome. De Rossi concludes from this, that Ampliatus was most probably the friend of S. Paul; this would account for the estimation in which this person of servile origin was held by the noblest of the Roman Christian Houses.

V

The Via Appia

On the Via Appia—"the Queen of Ways" as it was termed—there are four groups of cemeteries in close proximity. Two of these groups, probably three, are linked together by corridors.

The "Via Appia" led from the ancient Porta Capena through Albano, Aricia, etc., on to Capua, and later it was continued to Brindisi. Three of the four groups of cemeteries or catacombs coming from Rome are on the right of the way: the cemetery of S. Callistus, of S. Sebastian ("ad Catacombas"), of S. Soteris; and on the left that of Prætextatus.

We have alluded above to the ancient Pilgrim Itineraries as giving a sure index to De Rossi in his investigation and exploration work. As an example we append a short extract from the older of the two Pilgrim Guides known as the Salzburg Itinerary, which dates from about the year of grace 625: "You come by the Appian Way to S. Sebastian Martyr, whose body lies deep down; there too are the sepulchres of the Apostles Peter and Paul, in which they rested for 40 years. . . . North on the same Appian Way you come to the Martyrs Tiburtius, Valerianus, and Maximus. When there you pass into a large crypt and you find S. Urban,

Martyr and Confessor; in another spot Felicissimus and Agapitus, Martyrs; in a third place, Cyrinus Martyr; in a fourth, Januarius Martyr. On the same way you find S. Cecilia and a countless multitude of martyrs ('ibi innumerabilis multitudo Martyrum'), Sixtus Pope and Martyr, Dionysius Pope and Martyr, Julianus Pope and Martyr, Flavianus Pope and Martyr. There are 80 martyrs resting there. Zephyrinus Pope and Martyr rests above Eusebius; and Cornelius Pope and Martyr rests in a crypt a little further off; and then you come to the holy Virgin and Martyr Soteris."

Comparing the various Pilgrim Guides together, De Rossi found that, with very minor differences in the details, they agreed wonderfully; and in the main, although composed a thousand to thirteen hundred years ago, he was able with their help to identify the principal shrines visited by the pilgrim crowds of the sixth and two following centuries.

(1) *The Cemetery of S. Sebastian* ("*ad Catacombas*") is situated on the Via Appia, right-hand side; about one and a half miles from the Porta S. Sebastiana (the ancient Porta Appia). The principal "memory" belonging to this catacomb is the Platonia chamber—so called from its having been lined with marble—in which for a brief season were deposited the bodies of the two Apostles SS. Peter and Paul. The fact of this chamber having been the temporary home of the sacred bodies is undisputed; the exact date of their having been placed there, and the length of the period during which they were left in the Platonia chamber in question, have been the subject of much controversy. The period of forty years mentioned in the above quoted Pilgrim Itinerary is now reduced by the most dependable of modern scholars to two years, and the date of the placing of the bodies in this spot is now generally assumed to have been A.D. 258, in the days of the short but bitter persecution of Valerian, when the tombs on the Vatican Hill and on the Via Ostiensis were not considered safe from outrage. When the active persecution ceased, the remains of the two apostles were restored to their original resting-places; the spot, however, where the sacred bodies had rested for a brief season assumed in the eyes of the faithful a singular sanctity, and very many

desired to be laid in the immediate neighbourhood of the hallowed place. This was no doubt the original reason for the formation of the Cemetery "ad Catacombas," the name of the little district in which the temporary tomb of the two apostles was situated.

The catacomb in question was eventually named after Sebastian, a brave confessor in the persecution of Diocletian, *circa* A.D. 289–303. This Sebastian was tribune in the first cohort and commanded a company of the Prætorians, which was stationed on guard on the Palatine. He died for his faith under circumstances of a peculiar dramatic interest, being pierced with arrows and cruelly scourged. His body, so runs the probably true story, was taken out of the common sewer, into which it was ignominiously thrown, by a Christian matron named Lucina, who reverently interred it in the Cemetery "ad Catacombas" in the neighbourhood of the sacred Platonia chamber.

The remains of S. Sebastian were removed in the seventeenth century by Cardinal Borghesi from the crypt in which they were originally deposited and reinterred in the modern chapel which was erected over the ancient sanctuary. During the Middle Ages, when owing to the raids of the barbarians and consequent translation of the more celebrated martyrs to churches within the city, the eventful story of the catacombs was forgotten, this cemetery, owing to its connection with the two great apostles, was ever a hallowed sanctuary, and was visited by an unbroken stream of pilgrim visitors, and after the rediscovery of the City of the Dead in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, gave the name of its now famous district "ad Catacombas" to the various subterranean cemeteries which from time to time since then have been discovered.

The corridors with their graves in this famous cemetery have not yet been fully excavated.

The Cemetery of S. Callistus.—The great group of catacombs generally known under the title "S. Callistus" is situated on the right of the Via Appia, about a quarter of a mile nearer Rome than the Cemetery of S. Sebastian ("ad Catacombas") just described; the usual entrance being about

PAINTING IN A CHAPEL OF CATACOMB OF S. CALLISTUS—SHEWING A TOMB SUBSEQUENTLY EXCAVATED ABOVE THE ORIGINAL TOMB OF THE SAINT

one and a quarter miles from the Porta S. Sebastiana (Porta Appia).

It is composed of several groups of cemeteries of different periods from the first century to the fourth. These groups are so united by corridors that they may be considered as one vast catacomb. The Cemetery of Callistus in part dates from the first century, but it only obtained the designation of "Callistus" in the last years of the second or in the first years of the third century, when Callistus the deacon was appointed by Zephyrinus the Bishop of Rome as superintendent of *The Cemetery*. Subsequently Callistus succeeded Zephyrinus as bishop, and greatly enlarged the original area, one chamber of which he set apart as the official burying-place of the bishops or popes of Rome. Before the time of Callistus the official burying-place of the bishops was the cemetery on the Vatican Hill, immediately contiguous to the sepulchre of S. Peter. At the end of the second century the limited space on the Vatican Hill was completely occupied—hence the necessity for arranging a new papal crypt.

The oldest portion of the "Callistus" group is the so-called Crypt of Lucina (first and second century). It was evidently in the first instance excavated in the property of the noble family of the Cæcilii, and was used as the burying-place of Christian members of that great House. De Rossi believes that the "Lucina" in whose land the crypt was originally arranged was no other than the well-known Pomponia Græcina, wife of Plautius, the famous general in the days of Nero, whose conversion to Christianity about the year of grace 58 is alluded to in scarcely veiled language by Tacitus. If this be the case, the name "Lucina" was assumed by the great lady in question, and by which she was generally known in Christian circles. The assuming of such an "agnomen" was not uncommon among Roman ladies. The original area of the Cemetery of Lucina was greatly enlarged in the days of the Emperor Marcus and in the last years of the second century. The chapel of the popes, above alluded to, and other important funereal chambers, are included in this enlarged area.

It was in the course of the third century, no doubt after the construction of the new crypt or chapel of the

popes[1] by Callistus, and of course in part owing to the presence of this great historical centre, that the cemetery assumed its grandiose proportions.

The Cemetery of S. Soteris, a vast catacomb, communicates with the older portion of the Callistus crypt and corridors. Much is as yet unexplored here. S. Soteris—virgin and martyr—who has given her name to this great cemetery, was buried "in Cemeterio suo," A.D. 304. She suffered when the persecution of Diocletian was raging.

What we have termed the group, included generally under the term of the Callistus Catacomb, is the largest and most extensive of the catacombs which lie on the great roads which run through the suburbs and immediate neighbourhood of Rome.

The discovery of this important area of the ancient Christian City of the Dead was made in the year 1849, when De Rossi found in an old vineyard bordering on the Via Appia a fragment of an inscription bearing the letters "NELIUS Martyr." The Itineraries had recorded that Cornelius, Bishop of Rome and Martyr, had been buried in the "Callistus" Cemetery. In the course of subsequent searches the other portion of the broken tablet was found, which completed the inscription "Cornelius Martyr." The vineyard was purchased by Pope Pius IX, and very soon the searchers came upon the ruined chapel of the popes and the crypt of S. Cecilia.

The position of the historic Callistus Catacomb was thus established beyond doubt, and for some fifty years portions of the great cemetery have been slowly excavated by De Rossi and his companions; the results have been of the highest importance, and have contributed in no little degree to our knowledge of early Christianity—its faith—its hopes—its anticipations.

The Cemetery of Prætextatus is on the left hand of the Via Appia, almost parallel with the usual entrance to the vast network of the Catacomb of Callistus. It is, comparatively speaking, a cemetery of small dimensions, but of great antiquity. It must have been arranged quite early in the second

[1] The story of the tomb of S. Cecilia and her crypt is told in detail in the section immediately succeeding this general sketch of the catacombs, pp. 289–97.

century ; not improbably portions of this cemetery date from the first century. Some of the decorations of the historic crypt are elaborate and striking, and evidently belong to the best period of classical art. As yet it has only partially been explored. It runs under private property, and the owner apparently is unwilling to allow a detailed examination : this is disappointing, as owing to its great antiquity and possessing some historic crypts, once the resting-places of famous heroes in the early Christian combat, probably discoveries of high interest would result from a prolonged and careful search.

As early as A.D. 1857 De Rossi discovered in this cemetery of Prætextatus some crypts highly decorated, evidently the resting-places of certain famous martyrs referred to in the Pilgrim Itineraries as sleeping in this catacomb.

There are many indications that we meet with here which tell us that this is a very ancient cemetery. Speaking of this catacomb of Prætextatus, the pilgrim itineraries mention particularly three of those small Basilicas in the immediate vicinity, which frequently in the fourth or fifth centuries were built directly over the crypt or crypts which contained the remains of well-known martyrs and confessors ; this was for the convenience of pilgrims who came after from distant countries to pray at the shrines : the ruins of two of these Basilicas, apparently dedicated to SS. Valerian, Tiburtius, Maximus, and Zeno, have been discovered here. Of these confessors, Valerian and Tiburtius were respectively the husband and brother-in-law of S. Cecilia. Zeno[1] was also a martyr. Maximus was the Roman officer who had charge of the execution of Valerian and Tiburtius, and who, seeing their constancy under torture, became a Christian, and was in consequence put to death.

Other historic crypts have been ascertained to have existed in this little catacomb—namely, those of SS. Felicissimus, Agapetus, and Quirinus, with his daughter Balbina—of whom Felicissimus and Agapitus were deacons in attendance upon Pope Sixtus. They suffered martyrdom under Valerian, A.D. 258. Quirinus was a tribune who was put to death at an earlier period under the Emperor Hadrian.

[1] Further details respecting S. Zeno will be found below, p. 276.

A yet more famous confessor than any of these, S. Januarius, the eldest of the seven martyr sons of S. Felicitas, was buried in this sacred second-century catacomb of Prætextatus. The number of graffiti, the work of pilgrim visitors in the neighbourhood of the tomb of this Januarius, bears witness to the great veneration in which this martyr was held.

The ceiling of the tomb, which has been identified as that of S. Januarius, is beautifully decorated with paintings of the second century—representing the four seasons: the spring by flowers, the summer by ears of corn, the autumn by a vine, the winter by laurels; birds and little winged figures are artistically mingled in this very early decorative work. On the wall below a painting, representing the Good Shepherd with a sheep on His shoulder, has been almost destroyed by a grave excavated in the fourth century. The grave held the body of some devout Christian whose friends were anxious to lay their loved dead as near as possible to the sacred remains of the famous martyr S. Januarius. Not a few of the more striking of the catacomb paintings are thus unhappily disfigured by the mistaken piety of subsequent generations.[1]

The personality of Prætextatus, after whom this cemetery is named, is unknown.

VI

The Via Latina

The ancient Via Latina branches off from the Via Appia near the Baths of Caracalla. It is soon, however, lost among the vineyards, but reappears and leads eventually to the Alban Hills.

The Pilgrim Itineraries mention three cemeteries here. They give a certain number of names of martyrs buried in these catacombs—none, however, apparently well known. They also allude to "many martyrs" interred in these catacombs.

The names of the three catacombs in question are (1) Apronienus — perhaps the name of the original donor;

[1] Further details respecting the identification of this once famous shrine will be found below on pp. 301–2.

(2) SS. Gordianus and Epimachus; and (3) S. Tertullinus. These cemeteries have never been carefully examined, and even the site of the third has not yet been identified.

The Via Labicana

Leads from the Porta Maggiore, the ancient Porta Prænestina, to Palestrina. The Itineraries tell us of two cemeteries on this road, that of S. Castulus and that of SS. Peter and Marcellinus. The Catacomb of S. Castulus has only been very partially examined. It is in a ruinous condition, and is not at present accessible. S. Castulus suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Diocletian.

The Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, sometimes called "ad duas lauros," from the original name of the district, is in the immediate neighbourhood of the famous Torre Pignatara, the tomb of S. Helena, this appellation being derived from the pignatte or earthen pots used in the building. The magnificent porphyry sarcophagus now in the Vatican was removed from this tomb. SS. Peter and Marcellinus, from whom this once celebrated catacomb is named, suffered in the persecution of Diocletian. S. Peter was in orders as an exorcist. S. Marcellinus was a priest. Pope Damasus, in his inscription originally placed on their crypt, tells us he learned the particulars of their martyrdom from the executioner employed by the State. This cemetery has lately been partially explored. The bodies of the two saints who gave their names to the catacomb were carried away, and are now in Seligenstadt, near Mayence. The saints termed "the Quatuor Coronati" were in the first instance buried here, but their remains were subsequently translated by Pope Leo IV to the church on the Cœlian. This cemetery is of considerable extent.

The Itineraries enumerate the names of several martyrs once evidently well known. They also speak of many other martyrs buried here, using such expressions as "innumerabilis martyrum multitudo sepulta jacent"—"alii (Martyres) innumerabiles," etc.

The Via Tiburtina

The Via Tiburtina leads to Tivoli. It quits Rome by the Porta S. Lorenzo, which stands on the site of the ancient Porta Tiburtina. On this road are two large cemeteries, that of S. Cyriaca and that of S. Hippolytus. S. Cyriaca was a Christian widow. The importance, however, of this catacomb is mainly derived from its possessing the tomb of S. Laurence. S. Laurence suffered martyrdom A.D. 258, three days after the death of Pope Sixtus II, to whom he was attached as deacon. A very general tradition relates that Laurence suffered on a gridiron. An extraordinary popularity is attached to his memory. Marucchi, one of the latest scholars who has written on the catacombs, does not hesitate to say that the veneration paid to him was almost equal that accorded to the apostles. There is scarcely a city in Western Christendom which does not possess a church bearing his honoured name. In Rome itself there are six of these.

Over the crypt containing the tomb of S. Laurence, Constantine the Great built a little oratory or memoria, which soon became too small for the crowds of pilgrims. A second church was erected by Pope Sixtus III, A.D. 432, by the side of Constantine's Memoria which was ever known as "Basilica ad Corpus." The second church was termed the "Basilica Major." Three of the fifth century Popes of Rome were buried in the "Basilica ad Corpus." In the thirteenth century the two churches were made into one by Honorius III, A.D. 1218.

The Itineraries mention several well-known martyrs buried in the cemetery which was excavated round the martyr's sacred tomb, notably SS. Justus, Cyriaca, Simferosa, etc., "cum multis martyribus." The catacomb in comparatively modern times has been ruthlessly damaged by the works in connection with a very large modern cemetery. Only since A.D. 1894 has more care been taken in the preservation of the precious remains of this once important catacomb.

Cemetery of S. Hippolytus.—On the same great road,

the Via Tiburtina which stretches across the now desolate Campagna to Tivoli, on the northern side of the road almost opposite the Cemetery of S. Cyriaca on which stands the Basilica of S. Laurentius just described, is the Catacomb of S. Hippolytus. It is only comparatively recently that this cemetery has been really explored, and much still remains to be excavated here. A small basilica underground was discovered, with the historic crypt in which the once famous martyr was buried. The corridors around have been sadly ravaged again and again by barbarian invaders in the fifth and following centuries, and the whole catacomb is in ruin, and has been only in part investigated. It is evidently of considerable extent. Proximity to the tomb of the great scholar martyr was evidently a privilege eagerly sought by many from the middle years of the third century onward. The numbers of Pilgrim "Graffiti" or inscriptions more or less roughly carved and painted in the neighbourhood of the sanctuary, tell us that the spot where the remains of Hippolytus lay, was long the object of reverent pilgrimage after the Peace of the Church all through the fourth and following centuries. The Itineraries mention many martyrs buried here, among whom S. Genesius is perhaps the best known; he was a celebrated actor; once a mocker at the religion of which eventually he became the brave confessor; he died for his faith.

But the glory of this now ruined cemetery was the tomb of S. Hippolytus. He has been well described by Bishop Lightfoot in his long and exhaustive Memoir (*Apostolic Fathers*, Part I. vol. ii.).

"The position and influence of Hippolytus were unique among the Roman Christians of his age. He linked together the learning and the traditions of the East, the original home of Christianity, with the practical energy of the West, the scene of his own life labours. He was by far the most learned man in the Western Church. . . . Though he lived till within a few years of the middle of the third century, he could trace his pedigree back by only three steps, literary as well as ministerial, to the life and teaching of the Saviour Himself, Irenæus, of whom he was the pupil, Polycarp, and S. John. This

was his direct ancestry. No wonder if these facts secured to him exceptional honour in his own generation."

The position he occupied in the Christian world has been much disputed. He is usually described as Bishop of Portus, the harbour of Rome, and modern scholarship has come to the conclusion that he exercised a general superintendence with the rank of a bishop over the various congregations of foreigners, traders and others, on the Italian sea-board, with Portus as his headquarters.

A very dignified and striking statue, alas much mutilated, has been found amid the ruins over the Cemetery of Hippolytus. On the back and sides of the chair on which the figure of the scholar bishop is sitting, is engraved a generally received list of his works. There is no doubt as to the genuineness of the statue in question, which dates from about the year 222. It ranks as the oldest Christian statue which has come to light; indeed, it stands alone as an example of very early Christian sculpture, and was probably erected in an interval of the Church's peace in the reign of the Emperor Alexander Severus, and is a striking proof of the unique position which the writer and scholar held in the Christian community.

There is no doubt he was done to death—what, however, was the peculiar form of his martyrdom is uncertain. We know he was exiled to Sardinia, where he suffered, and his remains were brought back to Rome with the remains of Pontianus, somewhile Bishop of Rome, who also suffered martyrdom at the same time in Sardinia; Pontianus being laid in the papal crypt in the Cemetery of Callistus, and Hippolytus in the catacomb which bears his name on the Via Tiburtina, about the year 237.

Pope Damasus, the great restorer of the sanctuaries of Rome, enlarged and beautified the crypt where the honoured remains were deposited, in the latter years of the fourth century, and a few years later Prudentius the Christian poet in his collection of hymns entitled *Peristephanôn*—the Crowns of the Martyrs—devotes a long poem to the shrine and memory of Hippolytus.

In the opening years of the fourth century, when Honorius,

Theodosius' son, was reigning over the Western Empire, it is evident that the fame and reputation of Hippolytus, scholar and martyr, were among the popular histories of Christendom, and his tomb one of the chief objects of pilgrimage.

The lines of Prudentius, written in the closing years of the fourth century, are quoted as giving a picture of a famous catacomb as it appeared to a scholar and poet in the days of Theodosius and Honorius. They also give some idea of the estimation and reverential regard with which the martyrs and confessors of the first age of Christianity were held in the century which immediately followed the Peace of the Church:

"Hard by the City walls—amid the orchards—there is a Crypt. . . . Into its secret cells there is a steep path with winding stairs. . . . As you advance, the darkness as of night grows more dense. . . . At intervals, however, there are contrived openings cut in the roof above, which bring the bright rays of the sun into the crypt. Although the recesses twisting this way and that form narrow chambers, with galleries in deep gloom, yet some light finds its way through the pierced vaulting down into the hollow recesses. . . . And thus throughout the subterranean crypt it is possible still to revel in the brightness of the absent sun.

"To such secret recesses was the body of Hippolytus borne, quite near to the spot where now stands the altar dedicated to God.

"That same altar-slab provides the sacrament, and is the trusty guardian of its martyr's bones, which it guards there in the waiting for the Eternal Life, while it feeds the dwellers by the River Tiber with holy food.

"Marvellous is the sanctity of the place. The altar is close by for those who pray, and it assists the hopes of such by mercifully giving what they require. Here, too, have I when sick with ills of soul and body, often knelt in prayer and found help. . . . Early in the morning men come to salute (Hippolytus); all the youth of the place worship here; they come—they go—until the setting of the sun. Love

of religion gathers into one vast crowd both Latins and strangers."—*Translated from Prudentius, "Peristephanôn," Passion of S. Hippolytus.*

The close proximity of the Cemetery and Basilica of S. Laurence (above described) as years passed on was fatal to the memory of S. Hippolytus. From very early times S. Laurence, the deacon of Sixtus II, received extraordinary honour. He suffered, as we have stated, in the persecution of Decius, *circa* A.D. 258, and occupies the place of S. Stephen in the Church of the West. It was of this famous and popular saint that Augustine wrote: "Quam non potest abscondi Roma, tam non potest abscondi Laurentii corona." In the prayer of the oldest Roman sacramentary we read, "De beati solemnitate Laurentii, peculiaris præ ceteris Roma lætatur." "No marvel," writes Bishop Lightfoot, "that the aureole which encircled the heads of other neighbouring saints and martyrs, *even of the famous Hippolytus himself*, should have faded in the light of his unique splendour."

As years rolled on, the neighbouring Basilica of S. Laurence grew larger and grander. The Basilica of S. Hippolytus built over his cemetery faded away, comparatively uncared for; the great scholar was forgotten in the fame which gathered round the neighbouring popular saint. Paul I, A.D. 756–67, removed the sacred relique of the saint scholar to the well-known City Church of S. Silvester in Capite.

The Cemetery and Basilica of Hippolytus after the remains of the saint had been translated were quickly forgotten, and the very site was in time confused with that of the Cemetery and stately Church of S. Laurence on the other side of the Via Tiburtina. It was only in 1881 that De Rossi discovered the ancient cemetery and the ruined subterranean basilica above briefly described,—the basilica and catacomb visited by Prudentius in the last years of the fourth century, and so vividly painted by him in his hymn in the *Peristephanôn.*

Outside Rome there are traces of the fame of the great scholar, but not many. There is a ruined church in Portus bearing his name; its tower, still noticeable, is a conspicuous landmark in the desolate Campagna. Arles possesses a

church dedicated to Hippolytus. A strange story connects his remains with the once famous royal Abbey of S. Denis close to Paris. His body, or at least portions of his body, are also traditionally enshrined in churches at Brescia and Cologne. The Roman Churches of S. Laurence and the "Quatuor Coronati" also claim to possess reliques of S. Hippolytus.

But these few scattered and doubtful reliques are well-nigh all that remains of Hippolytus, and while many of his writings are still with us, bearing witness to his industry and scholarship, his name and life-work are virtually forgotten by men; and in ecclesiastical annals only a dim, blurred memory of the career of one of the greatest scholars and writers of the first two Christian centuries lives in the pages of that eventful story.

Of the two saints whose basilicas and cemeteries were so close together on that Campagna Road just outside Rome, the one, S. Laurence, men have crowned with an aureole of surpassing glory; the other, S. Hippolytus, whose title to honour was really far superior to that of his companion in the tombs of the Via Tiburtina, men have chosen to forget.

The Via Nomentana

The Via Nomentana leaves Rome on the north through the modern Porta Pia; in ancient times the Porta Nomentana, and in the Middle Ages the Porta S. Agnesi. On this road the Itineraries tell us of three cemeteries: that of S. Nicomedes, of S. Agnes, and the cemetery generally termed "Cœmeterium majus. De Rossi calls this last the Ostrian Cemetery; some call it after the famous martyred foster-sister of Agnes, S. Emerentiana, who was buried there.

(1) *Cemetery of S. Nicomedes.*—This is only a small catacomb, but it possesses a high interest on account of its age. It dates evidently from the first century. Tradition tells us that Nicomedes was a presbyter who lived in the days of Domitian. He suffered martyrdom for his faith's sake, and his body was thrown into the Tiber. A disciple of his, one Justus, recovered

his master's body and buried it " in horto juxta muros." The garden in question, hard by the city walls, was the site of the present little catacomb.

The masonry work here is of a very early date, and the various Greek inscriptions on the loculi also bear witness to its great antiquity; Marucchi alludes to a reservoir of water in the principal gallery, and believes that the presence of water prevented the cemetery from being further extended.

(2) *The Cemetery of S. Agnes* is on the Via Nomentana, about a mile from the Porta Pia. S. Agnes has been from very early times a singularly loved figure among the heroines of the days of persecution. Jerome well voices this popular estimate " omnium gentium litteris atque linguis . . . . vita laudata est." Her story is well known; how she refused to become the bride of the Proconsul's son, alleging that she was already the bride of Christ. After some terrible experiences she was condemned to be burned as a Christian, but the fire was too tardy or insufficient, so the executioner stabbed her in the throat. The name " Agnes " is simply a Christian appellation which she assumed signifying her purity and chastity. The name of her family is unknown; it is, however, certain that she belonged to a wealthy, probably to a noble House. She was interred in a cemetery, the property of her parents " in prædiolo suo."

Her martyrdom took place in the course of the persecution of the Emperor Valerian, *circa* A.D. 253–7. Portions of the catacomb which bears her name are of a yet older date than S. Agnes. Among other signs of great antiquity are the Greek inscriptions on various loculi. The cemetery, which has been explored with some care, consists of three stories, of different dates. It was, however, after the burying of the young martyr that the catacomb was developed and assumed considerable proportions, as many of the Christian congregation of Rome were desirous of depositing their loved dead in the immediate neighbourhood of the tomb of Agnes. The Emperor Constantine in the fourth century built the basilica known as S. Agnes over the tomb. There is an inscription on a small marble tablet at Naples, originally brought from Rome, which Armellini

considers was originally on the loculus containing the body of the saint. The inscription is as follows :

AGNE · SANC
TISSIMA

The basilica has been several times restored, but preserves with fair accuracy the original disposition of the Church of Constantine.

When it was first built in the fourth century, as we find in other similar instances, considerable destruction and havoc were wrought in the galleries of the catacomb. The fourth-century builders often mercilessly cut away and destroyed galleries, cubicula, loculi, when they arranged for the foundations and lower stories of the church large or small which arose over the tomb of the special saint and martyr. We would instance as conspicuous examples of this strange disregard of the older burying-places, the Basilicas of S. Domitilla, of S. Laurence, of S. Sylvester; the last named is built over the Cemetery of S. Priscilla.

The body of S. Agnes was never translated from its original home. In the year 1605, in the pontificate of Paul V, her remains, together with those of her foster-sister the martyr S. Emerentiana, were placed in a silver sarcophagus or urn. This was seen in the year 1901–2, when some work beneath the altar was being carried out.

(3) *The Cœmeterium majus* in the immediate neighbourhood of the Catacomb of S. Agnes. De Rossi names it the "Ostrian" Cemetery, and connects it with the memories of S. Peter, as being the place where the apostle used to baptize. Marucchi, however, in the light of recent discoveries in the Catacomb of Priscilla on the adjacent Via Salaria, unhesitatingly believes that the site of S. Peter's work and preaching must be sought for in the last-named cemetery. A brief résumé of Marucchi's arguments, which are most weighty, will be given when the Cemetery of Priscilla is described.

The glory of this cemetery (Cœmeterium majus), as the memory of S. Peter seems really to belong to the Catacomb of S. Priscilla, is that here was the original tomb of S. Emerentiana, who for her devotion to her foster-sister Agnes suffered

martyrdom very shortly after the death of Agnes. The site of the tomb has been ascertained, but the remains of Emerentiana now rest in the silver urn which contains the body of S. Agnes in her basilica beneath the altar.

The appellation "Cœmeterium majus" dates certainly from the fifth century. One of the more striking features of this catacomb is a little basilica not of later construction but belonging to the original work. It is simply excavated in the tufa stone, and is divided into two parts by the passage running through the cemetery. It is a perfect subterranean church, containing separate divisions for men and women. The presbytery and the position of the altar are clearly defined; the very chair for the bishop or presiding presbyter is in its place, as is the pillar on which the sacred oil burned in front of some hallowed sanctuary. We wonder what was the special purpose for which this little church, in the middle of the cemetery, was designed?

The Itineraries mention that various martyrs, whose life-stories are generally unknown to us, were buried here.

VII

The Via Salaria Nova

The Via Salaria Nova, like the Via Nomentana, from which it is but a little distant, lies on the north side of the city. Abutting on the road are four cemeteries: S. Felicitas, Thrason and Saturninus, Jordani, and the very important and most ancient Catacomb of S. Priscilla.

The story of S. Felicitas, who with her seven sons was put to death for her religion in the reign of and by the direct commandment of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, *circa* A.D. 162, is fairly well known. The "Acts" of the martyrdom by many scholars are not reckoned authentic, although the document in question is allowed to be of very high antiquity.

The story is generally very sharply criticized, as a reproduction of a story from the Fourth Book of Maccabees. The high estimation in which the Emperor Marcus universally now is held, no doubt contributes to the severe criticism

with which the story of Felicitas and her seven sons is received. Naturally there is considerable reluctance in acknowledging in any way the truth of a story in which the favourite hero of historians and philosophers, the noble Emperor Marcus, plays so sorry a part, and in which the brave constancy and noble endurance of a group of those Christians he so much disliked and tried to despise, is so conspicuously displayed.

But this is one of the many instances, a witness no one can gainsay, of the catacombs to the main truth of a story hitherto largely discredited. The tombs of the heroic mother and her brave sons have been identified. We recapitulate.

In the Catacomb of S. Felicitas the body of the mother was interred and subsequently removed to the basilica built over the cemetery in question. In the ancient Catacomb of Prætextatus, Januarius' (the eldest of Felicitas' sons) tomb has been found; nay more—from the numerous prayers and allusions in the graffiti around it, it is evident that the tomb in question was deeply reverenced by generations of pilgrim visitors. In the famous Priscilla Catacomb two out of the seven have been found—Felix and Philip. We know, too, that in the Jordani Cemetery, Martialis, Vitalis, and Alexander lie buried. In the Catacomb of Maximus, a cemetery on the Via Salaria which has not been identified, Silanus, the seventh of the faithful band, was laid. The body of Silanus, the youngest, apparently was carried away, but subsequently restored, and laid in the same catacomb with his mother.

After the Peace of the Church a little basilica was erected over the Cemetery of S. Felicitas, and Pope Damasus wrote in her honour one of his Epistles. At the end of the eighth century Pope Leo III translated the remains of the mother and her son Silanus to the Church of S. Suzanna.[1] There they are still resting.

After the translation of its precious relics, the cemetery

[1] The Church of S. Suzanna has a striking history. It was rebuilt by Maderno for Sixtus V, on the site of an ancient church or oratory erected by Pope Caius, A.D. 283, in the house of his brother, who suffered martyrdom with his daughter, Suzanna, because she refused to break her vow of perpetual virginity by a marriage with the adopted son of the Emperor Diocletian. The bodies of these two martyrs still rest beneath the high altar.

of which we are speaking; in common with so many of the catacombs; was deserted by the pilgrim visitors, and its very site was quickly forgotten. De Rossi, in 1858, was enabled to point out its situation, but it was not examined until the year 1884, when some workmen digging the foundations of a house came upon some ancient loculi, with inscriptions, and a number of dim faint pictures. The little basilica of the sixth century thus came to light, and the ruins of what had once been the tomb and shrine of S. Felicitas in the catacomb which bears her name.

On the Via Salaria Nova, between the Cemetery of S. Felicitas and the very important Cemetery of S. Priscilla, there exists what may be termed a network of catacombs only very partially explored. The first is called after *Thrason*, a wealthy Roman citizen who gave the hospitality of the tomb in a catacomb beneath his gardens to several martyrs to the Diocletian persecution—notably to Saturninus. This portion of the catacombs has as yet been only very little explored; the corridors, etc., are still earthed up.

A little farther on the same road is another cemetery, generally known too under the same name—"Thrason." Marucchi, however, calls it "*Cœmeterium Jordanorum.*" It is probable that it was joined originally to that of Thrason. The meaning of the term "Jordani" used in the old Pilgrim Itineraries is uncertain. This is one of the deepest excavated cemeteries. As many as four stories of galleries, one beneath the other, have been found here. Several "Arenaria" or sand-pits intervene between the groups of galleries of this catacomb. All this extensive network of catacombs and arenaria has only been partially excavated as yet. The work is naturally costly to execute, and is accompanied with some danger.

De Rossi places in one of these "Arenaria" or sand-pits in the midst of this group of Catacombs of Thrason and the Jordani on the Via Salaria, the scene of the martyrdom of the well-known SS. Chrysanthus and his wife Daria, who bore their witness unto death in the persecution of the Emperor Numerian, *circa* A.D. 284. Daria had once been a Vestal Virgin; she became a Christian, and was the especial object of hatred by the fading pagan party.

S. Gregory of Tours, in his De Gloriâ Martyrum relates how after the Peace of the Church, when the tombs of these two famous martyrs were searched for and discovered, in the historic crypt of their tomb were found the sad remains of a large group of Christians—men, women, and even children. Some time after the martyrdom of SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, a number of Christians secretly came to the crypt to pray at the martyrs' tomb. Information was given, and the Imperial authority with all haste directed that the entrance should be walled up. This was speedily done, and the group of Christian worshippers were thus buried alive. The bodies were found, as Gregory of Tours relates, and with them the eucharistic vessels of silver they had brought for the celebration of the Holy Communion.

Pope Damasus, who made this singular discovery in the latter years of the fourth century—about a century after this wholesale martyrdom—would not allow the group or the sacred tomb to be touched; but simply in the piled-up stones caused a little window to be made, that pilgrims might look on and venerate this strange sad group of martyrs.

De Rossi ever hoped to come upon this little window in question, and after fifteen centuries again to gaze with all reverence on this "miniature Christian Pompeii!"

S. Gregory in the sixth century tells us the little window looking on this moving scene was shown to pilgrims of his day and time.

De Rossi's hope—nay more, his expectation—of finding the window has not yet been gratified, the ruinous state of the catacomb preventing any exhaustive search.

There are many martyrs' tombs and historic crypts, we learn from the Pilgrim Itineraries, still to be uncovered in this group of cemeteries.

The Cemetery of S. Priscilla.—Recent researches have added much to our previous knowledge of this catacomb, and have confirmed De Rossi's judgment of its great antiquity and importance. Indeed, it ranks with the great network of the Callistus and Domitilla Cemeteries on the Appian and Ardeatina Roads—not in extent perhaps, but certainly in

antiquity and interest. It lies along the Salarian Way above described as on the north of the city.

De Rossi's words are memorable: "The Cemetery of Priscilla is a centre where the various memories connected with the Churches of Pudens and Priscilla meet like lines drawn from different places."

Now three of the most ancient churches of Rome—churches whose foundation stories were laid in apostolic times—are referred to by the great scholar and archæologist here. They are S. Pudentiana on the Viminal Hill, S. Prassedis on the Esquiline, and S. Priscilla (S. Prisca) on the Aventine. Of these S. Priscilla is no doubt the lineal descendant of the church that was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, the friends of Paul. We trace it back to the fifth century. It is evident that before the fourth century the little church in the house of the tent-makers had become the public church of S. Priscilla. Its founders, the well-known Aquila and Priscilla, were buried in the Cemetery of Priscilla.

Pope Leo IV in the ninth century specially refers to their tombs in the Priscilla Cemetery.

The second of the three ancient churches, S. Prassedis, in common with S. Pudentiana, was on the vast estate which the family of Pudens possessed at the foot of the Esquiline. There is, however, no tradition extant as to when it was first founded. It is mentioned in an inscription of the fifth century in the Cemetery of S. Hippolytus, and again in the year 490 in the Acts of the Council under the presidency of Pope Symmachus. It has been restored several times, and in the early Middle Ages is famous as the first place where Pope Paschal I deposited the remains of the 2400 martyrs which were translated for security's sake from the various catacombs.

In our day and time this most ancient church is best known for the little chapel, called from its unusual and mysterious splendour "Orto del Paradiso." It is commonly called the Chapel of S. Zeno, to whom it was originally dedicated. S. Zeno suffered in the reign of Claudius (Gothicus), A.D. 268–70. He is buried in a crypt in the Cemetery of Prætextatus. S. Zeno is called in one of the Itineraries "The Brother of the S. Valentinus of the Catacomb on the

MOSAIC IN THE APSE OF THE CHURCH OF STA. PUDENZIANA, ROME

FOURTH CENTURY. OUR LORD WITH APOSTLES AND OTHERS: THE BUILDINGS IN THE BACKGROUND PROBABLY REPRESENT JERUSALEM. OF THE TWO FEMALE FIGURES STANDING BEHIND THE APOSTLES, THAT ON THE RIGHT OF THE SAVIOUR REPRESENTS S. PRASSEDES, THAT ON THE LEFT S. PUDENZIANA—THE DAUGHTERS OF PUDENS. THE MOSAIC IS OF THE TIME OF POPE SIRICIUS, A.D. 384-398

Flaminian Way." This famous chapel contains one of the great relics of Rome, the column to which it is said our Saviour in His Passion was bound—it is of the rarest blood jasper. In S. Prassedis are two ancient sarcophagi containing the remains of the two sainted sisters SS. Prassedis and Pudentiana, brought from their original tombs in the Cemetery of S. Priscilla at the time of the great translation of the remains of the saints by Paschal I. In the centre of the nave the well is still shown where S. Prassedis probably buried the remains of martyrs; a similar well exists in the sister church of S. Pudentiana.

The first of the three churches, S. Pudentiana, is by far the most interesting of the three. It is generally assumed to be the most ancient church in Rome; originally—so says the tradition—it was the church in the house of a senator named Pudens, who received and gave hospitality to S. Peter. It is mentioned in inscriptions of the fourth century. Siricius, who followed Damasus in the Roman Episcopate, A.D. 384–398, restored it. This would imply that it had existed long before the age of the Peace of the Church. It has alas! undergone many restorations since; but it still preserves a magnificent and stately mosaic in the apse, of the date of Siricius. This is the oldest piece of mosaic work in a Roman church. (S. Constantia with its beautiful mosaic roof, which is slightly older, was not in the first instance a church, but simply a mausoleum.) The figures of the two sisters SS. Prassedis and Pudentiana holding crowns, appear standing behind the Lord and His apostles. Recent investigations have brought other indications of its great antiquity to light, and Marucchi considers that yet more may be discovered.

A close connection evidently exists between these most ancient churches and the Cemetery of Priscilla we are about to speak of.

A very ancient document—"the Acts of Pastor and Timotheus"—which Baronius, Cardinal Wiseman, and others deem authentic, gives at some length the story of the foundation of this very early Church of S. Pudentiana; the majority of scholars, however, while acknowledging their great antiquity, hesitate to receive these "Acts" as belonging to the

very early period at which they purport to be written. They probably, however, embody the substance of the generally received tradition. This ancient document consists of two letters; the first from one Pastor, a priest, addressed to Timotheus; the second the answer of Timotheus. To these is added an appendix by Pastor, which takes up and completes the story. We give a portion of this:

"Pudens went to his Saviour leaving his daughters, strengthened with chastity, and learned in all the divine law. These sold their goods, and distributed the produce to the poor and persevered strictly in the love of Christ. . . . They desired to have a baptistery in their house, to which the blessed Pius (the Bishop of Rome, A.D. 142–57) not only consented but with his own hand drew the plan of the fountain. . . . By the advice of the blessed Pius, the enfranchisement of the Christian slaves was declared with all the ancient usages in the oratory founded by Pudens; there at the festival of Easter 96 were baptized, so that henceforth assemblies were constantly held in the said oratory, which night and day resounded with hymns of praise. Many pagans gladly came thither to find the faith and receive baptism. . . . The blessed Bishop Pius himself often visited it with joy, and offered the sacrifice for us to the Saviour.

"Then Pudentiana went to God. Her sister (Prassedis) and I (Pastor) wrapped her in perfumes, and kept her concealed in the oratory. Then after 28 days we carried her to the Cemetery of Priscilla and laid her near her father Pudens."

(Then follows an account of the death of Novatus, who, according to the Note in the Liber Pontificalis (2nd Recension) in the account of Pope Pius I, was apparently a brother of the two sisters; he bequeathed his goods to Prassedis, who proceeded to erect a church in his Baths.)

"At the end of two years a great persecution was declared against the Christians, and many of them received the crown of martyrdom. Prassedis concealed a great number of them in her oratory. . . . The Emperor Antoninus heard of these meetings in the oratory of Prassedis, and many Christians were taken. . . . The blessed Prassedis collected their bodies by night and buried them in the Cemetery of Priscilla. . . .

Then the Virgin of the Saviour, worn out with sorrow, only asked for death. Her tears and her prayers reached to heaven, and 54 days after her brethren had suffered, she passed to God. And I, Pastor, the priest, have buried her body near that of her father Pudens." [1]

To sum up the general tradition, which the recent investigations in the Church of Pudentiana and in the Catacomb of S. Priscilla largely bear out:

A disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, one Pudens, a Roman of senatorial rank and rich, received S. Peter in his house, which became a meeting-place for Christian folk at Rome in very early days. This subsequently became the Church of S. Pudentiana. Pudens had two daughters, Pudentiana and Prassedis. Later the Baths of Novatus (who was brother of the two sisters), which apparently formed part of the house or palace of Pudens, became a recognized meeting-place for Christians, and this subsequently was termed the Church of S. Pudentiana.

The Cemetery of S. Priscilla on the Via Salaria also belonged to this Christian family, and was no doubt constructed on the property of the same Pudens. Pudens and his two daughters were buried in this cemetery. One portion of this catacomb was used as the burying-place of the illustrious family of the Acilii Glabriones which evidently numbered many Christian members.

De Rossi believes that Pudens, the father of the two sisters Pudentiana and Prassedis, belonged to this illustrious house of the Acilii Glabriones.

There was also evidently a near connection between the Aquila and Priscilla so closely associated with S. Paul and the family of Pudens. It has been suggested with great

[1] In two of the MSS. of the second edition or Recension of the *Liber Pontificalis* under the account of Pope Pius I (A.D. 142–57), we find the following note, which contains much of the substance of the above extract from the "Acts" of SS. Pudentianæ et Praxedis above quoted: "Hic (Pius) ex rogatu beate Praxedis dedicavit ecclesiam thermas Novati, in vico Patricii, in honore sororis sue sanetæ Potentianæ (Pudentianæ), ubi et multa dona obtulit; ubi sepius sacrificium Domino offerens ministrabat. Immo et fontem baptismi construi fecit, manus suas benedixit et consecravit, et multos venientes ad fidem baptizavit in nomine Trinitatis."

probability that Aquila was a freedman or client of Pudens, and that Aquila and his wife Priscilla were intimately connected with the noble family we have been speaking of, Priscilla, S. Paul's friend, being named after the older Priscilla. All these, we know, were buried in the Cemetery of Priscilla. The Priscilla who has given her name to the catacomb was the mother of Pudens.

The foregoing little sketch, showing the connection of this Cemetery of Priscilla with these most ancient churches, is a necessary introduction to the description of the catacomb in question, which we have not hesitated to style one of the most important of the Roman cemeteries. It is, we think, one of the oldest, ranking here with the Cemeteries of Domitilla and the Lucina area of S. Callistus. Each of these three belongs probably to the first century of the Christian era.

From the references in the *Liberian Calendar*, compiled A.D. 354, under the head of "Depositiones Martyrum"; in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and in the Pilgrim Itineraries, we learn that in the Cemetery of Priscilla were interred the remains of many martyrs, confessors, and saints. There for several centuries rested the bodies of Aquila and Priscilla; Pudens and his sainted daughters Prassedis and Pudentiana; two of the martyred sons of S. Felicitas, Felix and Philip, who bore their witness in the days of the Emperor Marcus, and the Martyr Crescentius. Here too were buried seven of the Bishops of Rome, two of whom wear the martyr's crown—Marcellinus and Marcellus, who suffered in the Diocletian persecution. These are the most notable, but many other martyrs were interred in this most ancient God's acre.

Some of these hallowed remains, after the Peace of the Church in the fourth century, were brought up from the crypts of the great catacomb and laid in the basilica subsequently known as S. Sylvester.[1]

[1] See on p. 272, where details are given of the translation of these confessors and of certain of the bishops of Rome originally interred in the Cemetery of S. Priscilla, into the basilica of S. Sylvester, erected over the Priscilla Catacomb by Pope Sylvester, and named after both. The basilica in question was discovered by De Rossi in A.D. 1889, in the course of his investigations at S. Priscilla.

IN THE CATACOMB OF S. PRISCILLA (II OR III CENTURY). THE FIGURE OF THE DEAD ONE AS AN ORANTE—ON RIGHT THE THREE CHILDREN IN THE FURNACE—ON THE CEILING THE GOOD SHEPHERD WITH A GOAT ON HIS SHOULDERS

In the ninth century, when the great translation of the precious remains of the saints and martyrs from their old resting-places in the catacombs outside Rome to securer resting-places within the city, took place, the Cemetery of Priscilla in common with the other God's acres we term catacombs was despoiled of many of its sacred deposits. In common too with the other catacombs, S. Priscilla at once ceased to be an object of reverent pilgrimage, and was quickly forgotten, and remained forgotten for many hundred years. It has only been explored in the last thirty or forty years, and not yet by any means exhaustively. It was only in A.D. 1887 that the crypt of the noble family of the Acilii Glabriones was discovered.

Quite recent investigation and discoveries have now satisfied Marucchi, the last explorer and student of the catacombs, long the assistant and disciple of De Rossi, that the Cemetery of Priscilla must be identified as the locality of the preaching and teaching of S. Peter—so often alluded to as the "Sedes ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus"—that the Cemetery of S. Priscilla was the "*Cœmeterium ad Nymphas beati Petri ubi baptizaverat.*" Marucchi has with infinite pains and scholarship proved his point, and has shown to a wondering group of interested scholars the very pools still filled with water in the dark crypts of S. Priscilla in which the great apostle probably baptized the first converts to the religion of his Master, for whom in the end he witnessed his noble confession on the Vatican Hill in the reign of the Emperor Nero.

The Cemetery of Priscilla, as at present explored, consists roughly of two vast galleries; many of its crypts and corridors dating from the first and second centuries. Their age is accurately determined, among other well-known signs, by the character of the decorative work and by the nature and phraseology of the inscriptions; the existence of the many *Greek* epitaphs is one other sure proof of the very early date of the interments.

From the notices in the Pilgrim Itineraries, notwithstanding their present often ruined and desolate condition, a good many of the original tombs of the more famous confessors and saints can be fairly identified. We will indicate a few of the

more remarkable features of this important and venerable cemetery.

On the first story, the original tomb of Priscilla, according to the ancient Itineraries, is in a crypt close to an old entrance staircase. Close to the crypt is a large chamber of the second century, evidently used for public worship. Small chambers or chapels lead out of this large crypt, one of these being the famous Greek Chapel, so called in later times from some Greek inscriptions on the walls. The paintings on the walls are important and highly interesting. This ancient chapel was also used for worship. In the neighbourhood of this portion of the cemetery is a large crypt which from various sure signs, such as the evident desire on the part of many to make it their last home ; from the pillars on which once were placed the lamps which used ever to burn close to specially revered sanctuaries ; from the many means of access for pilgrims of the third and fourth centuries,—was clearly the last resting-place of several of the more famous saints of the Catacomb of S. Priscilla. No inscription or graffiti of pilgrims have yet been deciphered to tell us *who* lay here. It has been suggested that Prassedis, Pudentiana, and other well-known saints were probably interred in or near this place. Marucchi calls attention to the great number of loculi in this cemetery, still untouched—not rifled of their precious contents. The inscriptions on many of these loculi for the most part are very short and simple, containing little besides the name of the dead, with just a brief beautiful reference to the sure hope of the dead in Christ.

In this first or uppermost gallery of the catacomb on which we are dwelling, was discovered quite lately a very large crypt surrounded with corridors, sadly ruined, but with the remains of elaborate decoration still visible and with fragments of marble lying about, with pieces of sarcophagi and portions of inscriptions carefully carved, some in Greek, beautifully wrought. This area, which is quite distinct from the great cemetery in the midst of which it lies, once contained the remains of the Christian members of the noble Roman house of the Acilii Glabriones. From the inscriptions which have been found and deciphered, this burying-place of a famous family

dates from the first century, and the interments from the first and following centuries.

These Acilii Glabriones whose names occur and recur in the broken inscriptions were members of a distinguished family, holding a very high position in the aristocracy of Rome under the early Emperors. We learn a good deal about a head of this illustrious house, Acilius Glabrio, from the historians Suetonius and Dion Cassius.

In the year of grace 91, Acilius Glabrio was consul, and excited the jealousy of the Emperor Domitian, who condemned him to fight with wild beasts in the gardens of one of the Imperial villas. From this deadly combat he came out victorious, but the hatred of the Emperor was not satisfied, and he exiled the powerful patrician, and eventually put him to death.

The accusation against Acilius Glabrio seems to have been that he was among the "devisers of new things" ("molitores novarum rerum"). It was a vague and mysterious charge made against various persons of high degree in the reign of Domitian. The accusation was connected with the practice of some strange foreign superstition unknown to the State religion. This crime is now generally understood to have been the practice of Christianity, and Acilius Glabrio, Clemens the near kinsman of the Emperor, and many others alluded to by Suetonius who were arraigned under this charge and put to death, were evidently Christians. This conjecture, since the recent discovery of the great crypt of the Acilii Glabriones in the Priscilla Cemetery belonging to this noble house, has become a certainty, for the Christianity of those buried there has been absolutely proved from words and sacred Christian signs carved upon the broken slabs which once formed part of the sarcophagi and loculi bearing the family name.

Thus, according to Marucchi, to Allard the well-known and scholarly historian of the Persecutions, and to De Rossi, Acilius Glabrio, the great patrician, the consul of the first century, the contemporary of the Apostles Peter and Paul and no doubt their friend and convert, was one of that aristocratic group in Rome which accepted the faith of Jesus, a

group of which so little is known, and whose very existence hitherto has been generally questioned; and these, recognizing the brotherhood of slaves and freedmen and the poorest and saddest of the dwellers of the great city, not only helped them in their life, and associated them in all their dearest and most certain hopes, but gave them the "hospitality of the tomb"—constructing round the stately family crypt the corridors and funereal chambers where these poor and insignificant members of the Christian congregation might rest. The Priscilla Cemetery, dating as it does from the days of the apostle, is a great example of this loving Christian custom.

Now general tradition ascribes the foundation of this vast and ancient catacomb to Pudens, the wealthy senator; to his mother Priscilla, of whom beyond her name we know nothing; to her sainted daughters Prassedis and Pudentiana. The question then arises—Was this Pudens a member of the great house of the Acilii Glabriones? The leading Italian scholars in the lore of the catacombs think he certainly was. De Rossi even suspects that Pudens was the martyr consul himself. With our present knowledge this supposition cannot be decisively maintained. It is, however, an interesting hypothesis.

The Basilica of S. Sylvester, of which we shall speak presently, which was erected shortly after the Peace of the Church in the fourth century, was directly over the crypt of the Acilii Glabriones.

A very remarkable feature in the Catacomb of S. Priscilla are the reservoirs of water, which evidently served in very early days as baptisteries. The most considerable of these reservoirs or tanks is on the upper story of the cemetery, and is communicated with by a broad staircase of over twenty-five steps, which come out behind what was once the apsidal end of the Basilica of S. Sylvester. Marucchi describes it as "une vaste piscine encore pleine d'eau, desservie par un petit canal." This great baptistery became, from the fourth century onward, a spot of intense interest to the many pilgrims who visited the catacomb sanctuaries.

Another large reservoir of water has been found on the

second story of this vast catacomb; other and smaller tanks have also been found.

Marucchi believes that this cemetery is the one alluded to in the many traditions, including the notices in the Pilgrim Itineraries, as the special scene of S. Peter's labours and preaching, teaching and baptizing, as the "cœmeterium beati Petri ubi baptizaverat," as the "sedes ubi prius sedit sanctus Petrus."

The investigation which has led to recent discoveries in this cemetery had not been completed when De Rossi identified the Cœmeterium Ostrianum (of which we spoke above) as the scene of S. Peter's work. It is these latest "finds" that have induced Marucchi to fix the Priscilla Cemetery as the place where the great apostle laboured in those early years of the history of Roman Christianity.

Beneath the first vast gallery of this catacomb with its many memories of saints and martyrs, including the famous crypt of the "Acilii Glabriones" house, lies another and very ancient area of sepulchral galleries.

This area was communicated with by several staircases, some of which are now completely closed. This vast sepulchral area has been as yet only partially explored. It is described roughly as consisting of a long gallery, out of which lead more than twenty other galleries, many of which as yet are only imperfectly investigated.

Marucchi, who has devoted a long and important section of his great work to the Priscilla Catacomb, writes of this second story of the cemetery as the most extensive and carefully planned of all the cemeteries of subterranean Rome that have been yet examined.

His words here are remarkable, and must be quoted: "On peut dire sans exaggeration, que c'est la région cemétériale la plus vaste et la plus régulière de toute la Rome souterraine."

The masonry used in its construction; its many inscriptions on the loculi, carved in marble, or painted in red on tiles,—all bear witness of its hoar antiquity; much of it dates certainly from the second century. It contains, as we have remarked already, a reservoir or tank of water—of course a baptistery—deep and of considerable size.

This singular feature, when taken in conjunction with the great tank or reservoir of the first story and the several smaller tanks or reservoirs discovered in the various corridors and sepulchral chambers—peculiarities and features possessed by no other catacomb—amply justifies the ancient appellation "ad Nymphas," which no doubt exclusively belongs to the Cemetery of S. Priscilla, and which in several parts seems to preserve a memory of the baptisms of S. Peter.

Over most of the catacombs—certainly over the more important—shortly after the Peace of the Church, basilicas or churches of various dimensions were erected for the accommodation of pilgrims and members of the Roman congregations who desired to visit and to venerate the sanctuaries of the subterranean cemeteries which soon became famous and objects of reverence in the Christian world. The basilica subsequently known as S. Sylvester, which was built over the Cemetery of Priscilla, no doubt before the year 336, has perhaps obtained a greater notoriety than any other of these fourth-century cemetery churches.

Into this basilica, apparently shortly after its erection, were translated many of the bodies of martyrs, whose remains had been in the first instance deposited in the crypts of S. Priscilla beneath. The Pilgrim Itineraries dwell upon this, and especially mention how under the high altar of S. Sylvester two of the martyred sons of S. Felicitas rested—Felix and Philip.

Into S. Sylvester, too, were brought the remains of the two martyr Popes, Marcellus and Marcellinus. There also Pope Sylvester, the builder of the basilica after whom it has been named, was interred; and at his feet Pope Siricius, the successor of Pope Damasus. Three more of the occupants of the papal dignity have been interred in this honoured sanctuary, namely, Liberius, A.D. 353–5; Celestinus, A.D. 422–32; and at a somewhat later date Pope Vigilius, A.D. 538–55; in all the remains of seven of the Bishops of Rome rested in S. Sylvester.

Indeed, this little basilica ranks as the third of the sacred places of interment of the Bishops of Rome. The *first* is on the Vatican Hill—in the immediate neighbourhood of the

CHAPEL OF THE TOMBS OF THE III CENTURY BISHOPS OF ROME. PARTLY RESTORED. CATACOMB OF S. CALLISTUS

grave of S. Peter—where ten or eleven of the first occupants of the See of Rome lie. The *second* is the famous so-called Papal Crypt in the Cemetery of S. Callistus on the Appian Way. The *third* is the Basilica of S. Sylvester over the Cemetery of Priscilla. The *fourth* is once more on the Vatican Hill, near the grave of S. Peter, in the stately church erected by the Emperor Constantine on the site of the little Memoria chapel of Linus.

It has been well suggested that in each instance the selection of the spot for the formal creation of an official papal burying-place was influenced by some direct memory of S. Peter which was attached to the spot in question. In the case of the first and fourth this is obvious.

In the case of the first was the little Memoria over the sacred tomb. In the case of the fourth—the place selected was on the Vatican Hill—under the shadow of the house of God erected by Constantine over the first Memoria.

Round the grave of S. Peter it was natural and fitting that the first Bishops of Rome should lie. When the space was entirely filled up, as was the case at the close of the second century, and a fresh official burying-place for the Bishops had to be found, Zephyrinus and Callistus were, with great probability, directed to that great cemetery which at a very early date bore the name of Callistus, on account of the memories of S. Peter and S. Paul, which were connected with the adjacent cemetery "ad Catacombas" (S. Sebastian); and Marucchi thinks some treasured memory of the great apostle connected with the beautiful legend of the "Quo vadis"—a spot not far from the Callistus Cemetery—hung round the God's acre selected for the site of the Papal Crypt.

The third choice of a spot for the burying-place of the Popes, the basilica on the S. Priscilla Catacomb, has been attributed to the many memories of S. Peter associated with the Catacomb in question, which are now identified with the scenes of S. Peter's teaching and baptizing.

There in the Basilica of S. Sylvester, until the great translation of the Catacomb saints in the pontificates of Paul I and Paschal I was carried out, the remains of the seven Popes, the two sons of Felicitas, and of many other famous and

heroic martyrs rested. When, however, the precious treasure of these saints' remains was removed to the securer shelter of the metropolis hard by, S. Priscilla's Catacomb and Basilica were soon forgotten.

There is, alas! little left of the basilica of S. Sylvester; its very existence was unknown until De Rossi discovered its ruins in 1889. The subterranean crypt and corridors and baptisteries have fared better than the basilica built above them, and have already provided an almost inexhaustible mine of riches for the antiquarian, the theologian, and the historian; and in coming years, when further investigations in this vast historical cemetery are carried out, discoveries of a yet greater interest may be looked for—discoveries, to use the words of the latest toiler in S. Priscilla, which may tell us more of the "passing by" of S. Peter in this venerable home of so many and such varied sacred memories.

VIII

The Via Salaria Vetus and Via Flaminia

Cemetery of S. Pamphilus.—S. Pamphilus, we learn from the Itineraries, was a martyr; nothing, however, is known of his history.

The cemetery has not been thoroughly explored. It is, however, of some importance. Several galleries have been partially examined—but with some risk.

The *Via Salaria Vetus*, by the side of which this Catacomb, is situated, branches off from the Via Pinciana on the north of the city.

Cemetery of S. Hermes and S. Basilissa is on the same road, a little farther from the city.

The "Acts of S. Hermes" are not accepted as belonging to the very early date (A.D. 119—when Hadrian was Emperor) of the martyrdom, the particular event they profess to relate. These Acts relate that Hermes was a Prefect of Rome. No such name occurs in the lists of Prefects. It has been suggested, however, that he was an official of the Prefect.

The remains of a very considerable basilica have been

discovered in this Catacomb ; a yet older building apparently existed in the same position.

The galleries of graves that have been partially explored are in a very ruinous and dangerous condition. It is recorded that the body of S. Hermes was translated by Pope Gregory IV in the ninth century. There are parts of this crumbling cemetery evidently of great antiquity.

Other martyrs, once well known, rest in this Catacomb ; of these, S. Basilissa, S. Protus and S. Hyacinthus are perhaps the best known. SS. Protus and Hyacinthus apparently suffered in the persecution of Valerian, A.D. 257–8. The tomb of S. Basilissa has not been identified.

The remains of S. Hyacinthus were found as late as 1841 in a *closed* loculus and wrapped in a cloth which still emitted a sweet perfume. The bones had evidently been burned. It has been suggested that probably the martyr had suffered by fire ; this was an unusual form of martyrdom. The name of the saint and date of the deposition and the word *Martyr* were on the loculus. The inscription and the hallowed remains are now in the Church of the Propaganda.

Probably further investigation will be made in this interesting but ruined Catacomb. Researches here, however, are difficult and dangerous. Much of the work of Damasus in the later part of the fourth century has been recognized in this place. This cemetery was apparently held in high estimation by the earlier pilgrims.

The Itineraries speak of another cemetery on the Via Salaria Vetus under the name of "ad Clivum Cucumeris," but it has not as yet been identified.

Cemetery of S. Valentinus.—The old Via Flaminia leaves the city at its north-east corner, and is a direct continuation of the Corso. It is the great road communicating with the north of Italy, as the Via Appia does with South Italy. It passes through the Porta del Popolo, formerly the Gate of S. Valentinus ; in old days it was termed the Flaminian Gate. On this Via Flaminia not very far from the city there is the Catacomb of S. Valentinus—the only cemetery on this road.

S. Valentinus is the last of our long catalogue of subterranean cemeteries. Little is known of the confessor and

martyr after whom this Catacomb is named. His "Acts," as we possess them, were only compiled in the sixth century. Valentinus suffered martyrdom *circa* A.D. 268–70. (Claudius Gothicus was then Emperor.) He is stated to have been a Christian priest and physician.

The martyr's body was recovered by Sabinilla, a Christian lady, and was buried near the place where he suffered. The desire to be buried near S. Valentinus led to further excavations, but the tufa in this place was too hard and did not lend itself to the formation of galleries. Corridors were excavated above the tomb of the martyr; little, however, of interest has been found as yet. A third gallery was also constructed. It was the second gallery above the grave of the martyr which became the public cemetery, but it has been only very partially examined; much is still blocked up.

Some time after the Peace of the Church, under Pope Julius, A.D. 337–52, a basilica named after S. Valentinus was built a little to the right of the martyr's crypt. This church was restored, probably rebuilt, by Pope Honorius I, A.D. 625–38. The ruins of this Church of S. Valentinus have been recently brought to light. The Itineraries speak of the body of S. Valentinus as in the restored basilica. These sacred remains were, as in other cases, no doubt translated from their original resting-place into the church above. The bodies of other martyrs who probably suffered in the Diocletian persecution are alluded to in the Pilgrim Guides. In the ruins of the basilica a chapel was identified by an inscription as having been dedicated to certain of the local martyrs, and with these nameless saints S. Zeno is mentioned by name. S. Zeno was evidently once highly venerated. His presence here is accounted for by a notice in one of the Itineraries, which styles him "frater Valentini,"—possibly only signifying "frater in Passione."

S. Zeno was buried in the well-known Cemetery of Prætextatus on the Appian Way. He is perhaps best known now from the famous Chapel of S. Zeno in the Church of S. Prassedis, the work of Pope Paschal I—usually called the "Orto del Paradiso." A mosaic in that beautiful chapel pictures the two martyrs S. Valentinus and S. Zeno together.

APPENDICES

[APPENDIX I.—ON S. PETRONILLA

Baronius, followed by Bishop Lightfoot of Durham and others, calls attention to an etymological difficulty which exists in attempting to derive Petronilla from Petros, which at first sight seems so obvious. These scholars prefer to connect the name "Petronilla" not with Petros but with "Petronius." Now, the founder of the Flavian family was T. Flavius Petro. Lightfoot then proceeds to suggest that "Petronilla" was a scion of the Flavian house, and became a convert to Christianity, probably in the days of Antoninus Pius, and was subsequently buried with other Christian members of the great Flavian house in the Domitilla Cemetery.

De Rossi, however, and other recent scholars in the lore of the Catacombs, in spite of the presumed etymological difficulty, decline to give up the original "Petrine" tradition, but prefer to assume that Petronilla *was* a daughter, but only a *spiritual* daughter, of the great apostle—that is, she was simply an ordinary convert of S. Peter's.

Of these two hypotheses: (*a*) dealing with the first, in the very free and rough way in which the Latin tongue was treated at a comparatively early date in the story of the Empire, when grammar, spelling, and prosody were very frequently more or less disregarded save in highly cultured circles, the etymological difficulty referred to by Lightfoot can scarcely be pressed, for it possesses little weight.

(*b*) As regards the second hypothesis—the shrinking, which more modern Roman Catholic theologians apparently feel, from the acknowledgment that S. Peter had a daughter at all, was absolutely unknown in the earlier Christian centuries. To give an example. As late as the close of the

eighth century, on an altar of a church in Bourges dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and other saints, there is an inscription attributed to Alcuin the scholar minister of Charlemagne. In this inscription occurs the following line :

"Et Petronilla patris præclari filia Petri."

Now, towards the close of the fourth century, Pope Siricius, between A.D. 391 and A.D. 395, constructed the important basilica lately discovered in the Domitilla Cemetery on the Via Ardeatina ; but although the basilica in question contained the historic tombs of the famous martyrs SS. Nereus and Achilles, confessors of the first century, as well as the body of S. Petronilla, he dedicated the basilica in question in her honour. Pope Siricius would surely have never named this important and very early church after a comparatively unknown member of the Flavian house ; still less would he have called it by the name of a simple convert of the great apostle.

In Siricius' eyes there was evidently no shadow of doubt but that the Petronilla for whom he had so deep a veneration was the daughter of S. Peter, and nothing but such an illustrious lineage can possibly account for the persistent devotion paid to her remains, a devotion which, as we have seen, endured for many centuries ; the ancient tradition that she was the daughter of the apostle was evidently unvarying and undisputed.

It was left to the modern scholar in his zeal for the purity of the language he admired, and for the modern devout Romanist in his anxiety to show that S. Peter was free from all home and family ties, to throw doubts on the identity of one whom an unbroken tradition and an unswerving reverence from time immemorial regarded as the daughter of the great apostle so loved and revered in Rome.

In other places besides in Gaul and Rome we find traces of this very early cult of S. Petronilla. In the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds her memory was anciently reverenced ; under the curious abbreviation of "S. Parnel," still in that locality, there is a church named after her—at Whepstead, Bury St. Edmunds. A yet more remarkable historical reference appears in "Leland's Itinerary," an official writing,

be it understood, which dates *circa* A.D. 1539–40. Leland, writing of Osric, somewhile king of Northumbria, the founder of the famous Abbey of Gloucester, tells us how this King Osric "first laye in St. Petronell's Chappel," of the Gloucester Abbey. Osric died in the year of grace 729.

Thus before her body, at the instance of the Frankish King Pepin, was translated into the little imperial mausoleum hard by the great Basilica of S. Peter from her tomb on the Via Ardeatina, there was a Mercian chapel named after this Petronilla in the heart of the distant and only very imperfectly christianized Angle-land (England).

In the "Historia Monasterii S. Petri Gloucestriæ," a document, or rather a collection of documents, of great value, we find an entry which tells us how Kyneburg, the sister of King Osric, and first abbess of the religious house of Gloucester, ruled the house for twenty-nine years, and, dying in A.D. 710, was buried *before the altar of S. Petronilla*; and later an entry in the same Historia relates that Queen Eadburg, widow of Wulphere, king of the Mercians, abbess of Gloucester from A.D. 710 to A.D. 735, was buried by the side of Kyneburg *before S. Petronilla's altar*. King Osric himself, who died in A.D. 729, was buried in the same grave as his sister Kyneburg, or as it is expressed in the "Historia," "in ecclesia Sancti Petri coram altari sanctæ Petronillæ, in Aquilonari parte ejusdem monasterii."

Professor Freeman quaintly comments here as follows: "It is certain that there was a church of some kind, a predecessor, however humble, of the great Cathedral Church (of Gloucester) that now is, at least from the days of Osric (*circa* A.D. 729). But more than this we cannot say, except that it contained *an altar of S. Petronilla*."

APPENDIX II.—ON S. PETER'S TOMB

S. Peter's Tomb.—While Pope Paul V's task of destroying and rebuilding the eastern end of old S. Peter's (the work

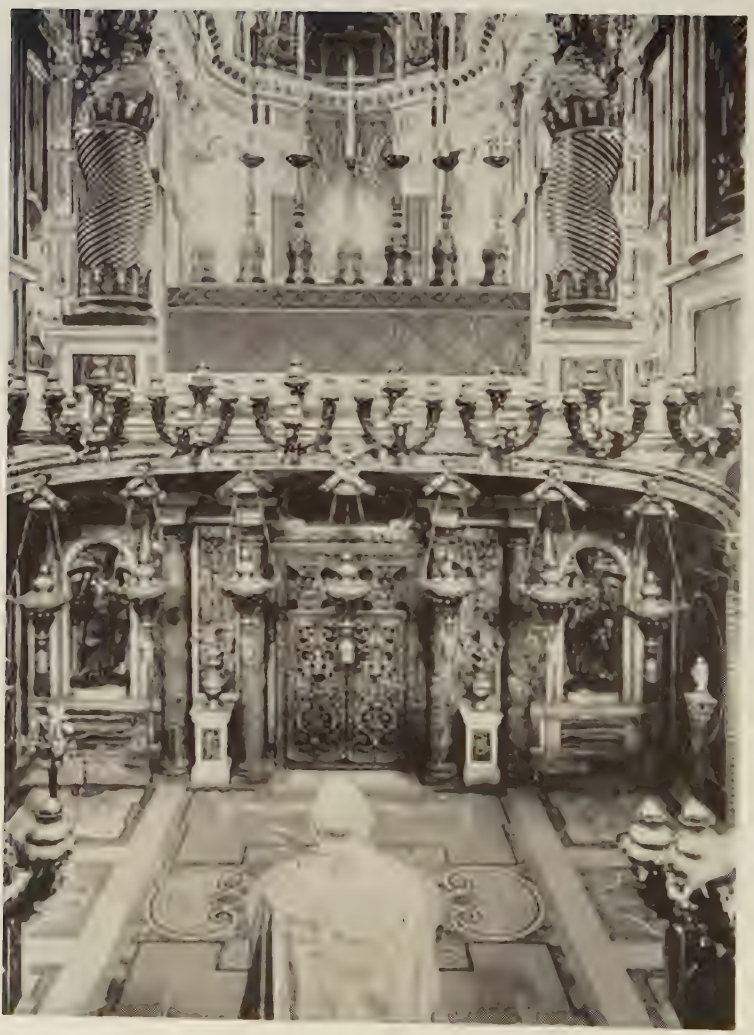
of Constantine) was proceeding, somewhat before A.D. 1615 the same Pope designed to make the approaches to the sacred "Confession" of the apostle at the west end of the church more dignified, and it was in the course of building stairs and making certain excavations which were necessary to carry out his plans that his architect came upon a number of graves in the immediate neighbourhood of the walls which encircled the hallowed tomb of S. Peter. Here was evidently the old Cemetery of the Vatican which originally had been planned in the first century by Anacletus. Some memoranda of this discovery were made. But it was a few years later, when more important excavations were carried on in the pontificate of Pope Urban VIII (Cardinal Barberini) in connection with the foundations necessary for the support of the enormous baldachino of bronze over the high altar, that this most ancient cemetery was more fully brought to light.

The circumstances which led to these discoveries of Urban VIII were as follows: The date is about A.D. 1626; Bernini was the architect in the Pope's confidence, and it was determined to replace the existing canopy over the altar and confession, which was considered too small and insignificant for its position, by the great and massive bronze baldachino which now covers the high altar and the confession leading to the sacred tomb.

The materials for this mighty canopy and its pillars were obtained from the portico of the Pantheon, the roof of the portico of that venerable building being stripped of its gilded bronze. This portico had survived from the days of its builder Agrippa, the son-in-law of the Emperor Augustus.

The act of Urban VIII, thus robbing one of the remaining glories of ancient Rome, was severely criticised in his day, and the well-known epigram survives to commemorate this strange act of late "vandalism": "Quod barbari non fecerunt, fecit Barberini."

The new baldachino or canopy of Bernini's was 95 feet in height, and is computed to weigh nearly 100 tons. To support this enormous weight of metal it was judged necessary to construct deep and extensive foundations. It was in the digging out and building up of these substructures



S. PETER'S, ROME—THE CONFESSION. 95 EVER-BURNING LAMPS ARE IN FRONT OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE APOSTLE'S TOMB

in the immediate vicinity of the apostle's tomb that the remarkable discoveries we are about to relate were made.

The account from which we quote is virtually a semi-official procès-verbal, and was compiled by an eye-witness—Ubaldi, a canon of S. Peter's, who was present when the discoveries were made, and who has left us his notes made on the spot and at the time. Singularly enough, the memoranda of Ubaldi lay disregarded, hidden among the Vatican archives until comparatively recently. They were found[1] by one of the keepers of these archives, and have been published lately by Professor Armellini.

Before, however, giving the extracts from Ubaldi's memoranda of the discoveries in the Cemetery of Anacletus in the year 1626, it will be of material assistance to the reader if a short account of the probable present position and state of the great apostle's tomb is subjoined. It will be borne in mind that the excavations in connection with Bernini's baldachino were carried out close to the tomb in question.

The vault, in which we believe rests the sarcophagus which contains the sacred remains of the apostle, lies now deep under the high altar of the great church. It was always subterranean, and no doubt from the earliest days was visited by numbers of believers belonging not only to the Roman congregation, but by pilgrims from many other countries. Pope Anacletus, to accommodate these numerous pilgrim visitors, built directly over the tomb a little Memoria or chapel. This apparently was done by raising the walls of the vault beneath, and thus a chamber or chapel above was provided. This Memoria of Anacletus is generally known as the confession. Both these chambers now lie beneath the floor of the existing church. Originally the Memoria of Anacletus above the chamber of the tomb

[1] The important and interesting details which follow here have been largely taken from the chapter which treats of Ubaldi's *Memoir* by Mr. Barnes in his admirable and massive work entitled *S. Peter at Rome* (1st edit. 1900). The writer of this book can hardly find terms to express his deep admiration for the learning and information contained in Mr. Barnes' work on the subject. It is by far the most exhaustive and scholarly work on the subject in our language.

showed above ground; it is no doubt the "Tropæum" alluded to by the Presbyter Caius, *circa* A.D. 210.

Roughly, the height of the two chambers from the floor of the original vault to the ceiling of the Memoria built over it is some 32 feet. There is little difference in the height of each of these two chambers.

The probable explanation of the details given in the *Liber Pontificalis* of the works of Constantine the Great at the tomb is as follows: Both the chambers of the tomb—the original vault and the Memoria of Anacletus over it — were left intact, but with certain added features, simply devised with the view of strengthening and ensuring the permanence of the sacred spot and its contents. The whole of the chamber of the tomb was then filled up with solid masonry, except immediately above the sarcophagus.

The upper chamber, the Memoria, was strengthened with masses of masonry on each side, so as to bear the weight of a great altar, the high altar of the Basilica of Constantine, which was erected so as to stand immediately over the body of S. Peter. A cataract or billicum, as it is sometimes called, covered with a bronze grating, opened from above close to the altar. There are two of these little openings, one leading into the Memoria, and the other from the Memoria to the chamber of the tomb beneath. Through these openings handkerchiefs and such-like objects would be lowered so as to touch the sarcophagus. This we know was not unfrequently permitted in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. Such objects after they had touched the coffin were esteemed as most precious relics.

In addition to these works in the two chambers, the Emperor Constantine enclosed the original stone coffin which contained the remains of S. Peter in bronze, and laid upon this bronze sarcophagus the great cross of gold—the gift of his mother Helena and himself. This is the cross which Pope Clement VIII and his cardinals saw dimly gleaming below, when an opening to the tomb was suddenly disclosed in the great building operations which were carried out during the last years of the sixteenth century.

There is scarcely room now for doubt that the bronze

coffin and the golden cross are still in the chamber of the tomb where Constantine placed them.

When it was found necessary to excavate for the foundation of the new massive baldachino, Pope Urban VIII was alarmed at first lest the sacred tomb should be disturbed. The warnings of Pope Gregory the Great against meddling with the tombs of saints like Peter and Paul being remembered, "no one dare even pray there," he once wrote, "without much fear." Three years were spent in preparation for the work and in casting the baldachino. Then the sudden death of Alemanni, the custodian of the Vatican library, who had the chief charge in the preparative work, and the passing away of two of the Pope's confidential staff just as the work commenced, appalled men's minds; but after some hesitation it was decided to go on with the necessary excavations—"All possible precautions," Ubaldi tells us, "being taken for the preservation of the reverence due to the spot, and for the security of the relics." The Pope commanded, "that while the labourers were at work there should always be present some of the priests and ministers of the Church."

Ubaldi describes at length what was found, when each of the four foundations for the four great columns of the baldachino was dug out. We will quote a few of Ubaldi's memoranda, and then give a little summary of what apparently was discovered in this perhaps the most ancient, certainly the most interesting, of the subterranean cemeteries of Christian Rome.

In the excavation of the first foundation—"only two or three inches under the pavement they began to find coffins and sarcophagi. Those nearest to the altar (above) were placed laterally against an ancient wall" (this was doubtless part of the wall of the Memoria of Anacletus), "and from this they judged that these must be the bodies buried nearest to the sepulchre of S. Peter. These were coffins of marble made of simple slabs of different sizes." Only one seems to have borne an inscription, and that was the solitary word "Linus." Was not this the coffin of the first Pope, the Linus saluted in S. Paul's Roman Epistle?

"Two of these coffins were uncovered. The bodies, which were clothed with long robes down to the heels, dark and

almost black with age, and which were swathed with bandages, . . . when these were touched and moved they were resolved into dust. . . . We can only conclude that those who were found so close to the body of S. Peter must have been the first (Martyr) Popes or their immediate successors. . . .

" On the same level, close up to the wall (of the Memoria) were found two other coffins of smaller size, each of which contained a small body, apparently of a child of ten or twelve years old." Were these, whose bodies had obtained the privilege of interment so close to the grave of S. Peter, little martyrs ? . . . Close by . . . were two (coffins) of ancient terra-cotta full of ashes and burnt bones, . . . other fragments of similar coffins were found deeper down as the excavations proceeded, and also pieces of glass from broken phials. It was evident that all this earth was mixed with ashes and tinged with the blood of martyrs. . . . There were also found pieces of charred wood which one might believe had served for the burning of the martyrs, and had afterwards been collected as jewels and buried there with their ashes."

A little farther on Ubaldi writes, still speaking of what was found where the first foundation was excavated : " There was next found a small well in which were a great number of bones mixed with ashes and earth ; then again another coffin ; near this was found another square place on the sides of which more bodies were found, while on one side was the continuation of a very ancient wall (the Memoria of Anacletus). This wall contained a niche which had been used as a sepulchre, and in it were found five heads fixed with plaster and carefully arranged, also being well preserved. Lower down were the ribs all together, and the other parts in their order mingled with much earth and ashes, not laid casually, but with accuracy and great care. All this holy company were shut in and well secured with lime and mortar. . . .

" It now became necessary to consider how the holy bones and bodies which had been taken up might best be laid in some fitting and memorable place ; they had been placed in several cases of cypress wood, and had been carried before the little altar of S. Peter in the confession, and here all through these days they had been kept locked up and under seal.

It was felt that they ought not to be deprived of the privilege of being near to the body of S. Peter. . . . So it was resolved that, as they had been found buried together and undistinguished by names, so still one grave should hold them all, since the holy martyrs are all one in eternity,"—as S. Gregory Nazianzen wonderfully says—" . . . a suitable and capacious grave was constructed " (close to the spot) " and there reinterment took place. The following inscription cut in a plate of lead was placed within the tomb—

> *Corpora Sanctorum prope sepulchrum sancti Petri inventa, cum fundamenta effoderentur æreis Columnis (of the baldachino of Bernini) ab Urbano VIII—super hac fornice erectis, hic siul collecta et reposita die 28 Julii 1626"*

In digging for the second foundation a very wonderful " find " was recorded. Ubaldi relates how, " not more than three or four feet down, there was discovered at the side a large coffin made of great slabs of marble. . . . Within were ashes with many bones all adhering together and half burned. These brought back to mind the famous fire in the time of Nero, three years before S. Peter's martyrdom, when the Christians, being falsely accused of causing the fire, and pronounced guilty of the crime, afforded in the circus of the gardens of Nero, which were situated just here on the Vatican Hill, the first spectacles of martyrdom. Some were put to death in various cruel ways, while others were set on fire, and used as torches in the night, thus inaugurating on the Vatican, by the light that they gave, the living splendour of the true religion. . . . These, so they say, were buried close to the place where they suffered martyrdom, and gave the first occasion for the religious veneration of this holy spot. . . . We therefore revered these holy bones, as being those of the first founders of the great basilica and the first-fruits of our martyrs, and having put back the coffin allowed it to remain in the same place."

With great pathos Mr. Barnes, from whose translation of the Ubaldi Memoranda on the discoveries in the Cemetery of Anacletus these extracts are taken, describes

the scene of the interment of these sad remains of the martyrs in the games of Nero. We quote a passage specially bearing on this strange and wonderful "find," where, after describing what took place in the famous games, he went on thus :

"The horrible scene drew to a close at last ; the *living* torches, burning slowly, flickered and went out, leaving but a heap of ashes and half-burnt flesh behind them ; the crowds of sightseers wended their way back to the city, and silence fell again on the gardens of Nero. Then there crept out through the darkness, within the circus and along the paths of the gardens, a fresh crowd—men and women, maidens and even little children, taking every one of them as they went their lives in their hands, for detection meant a cruel death on the morrow ; eager to save what they could of the relics of the martyrs : bones that had been gnawed by dogs and wild beasts ; ashes and half-burnt flesh, and other sad remnants, all of them precious indeed in the sight of their brethren who are left, relics that must not be lost. . . . Close by the circus, on the other side of the Via Aurelia, some Christians had already a tiny plot of ground available for purposes of burial. There on the morrow, in a great chest of stone, were deposited all the remains that could be collected ; for it was out of the question to keep them separate one from another." It was the beginning of the Vatican Cemetery, hereafter to become so famous. " . . . More than 1600 years afterward, when the excavations were being made for the new baldachino over the altar tomb of S. Peter himself, the sad relics of this first great persecution were brought to light. But they were not disturbed, and still rest in the place where they were originally laid, where now rises above them the glorious dome of the first Church of Christendom."

In the memoranda on the third foundation there is nothing of very special interest to note.

On the fourth foundation Ubaldi wrote the following strange and peculiarly interesting note : "Almost at the level of the pavement there was found a coffin made of fine and large slabs of marble. . . . This coffin was placed, just as were the others which were found on the other side, within the

circle of the presbytery, in such a manner that they were all directed towards the altar like spokes toward the centre of a wheel. Hence it was evident with how much reason this place merited the name of 'the Council of Martyrs.' . . . These bodies surrounded S. Peter just as they would have done when living at a synod or council."

These apparently were the remains of the first Bishops or Popes of Rome, for whom Anacletus made special provision when he arranged this earliest of cemeteries. Their names are, Linus whose coffin lies apart but still close to the apostle's tomb, Anacletus, Evaristus, Sixtus I, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Pius I, Eleutherius, and Victor. Victor was laid in this sacred spot in the year of grace 203. After him no Bishop of Rome was interred in the Cemetery of Anacletus on the Vatican Hill. Originally of but small dimensions, by that date it was filled up, and the successors of Pope Victor, we know, were interred in a chamber appropriated to them in the Cemetery of S. Callistus in the great Catacomb so named on the Appian Way.

The other interments in the sacred Vatican Cemetery in the immediate neighbourhood of the apostle's tomb—some of the more notable of which have been noticed in our little extracts from the Ubaldi Memoranda—were apparently the bodies or the sad remains of martyrs of the first and second centuries of the Christian era, or in a few cases of distinguished confessors of the Faith whose names and story are forgotten, but to whom Prudentius (quoted on p. 216) has alluded.

There is an invaluable record of what lies beneath the high altar and the western part of the great Mother Church of Christendom.

In a rare plan of this Cemetery of the Vatican drawn by Benedetto Drei, Master Mason of Pope Paul V, which apparently was made during the period of the first discoveries under Paul V, some time between A.D. 1607 and 1615, and which has received certain later corrections no doubt after the second series of discoveries consequent upon the excavations for the foundations in the neighbourhood of the tomb of S. Peter, for the great bronze baldachino of Bernini in the days of Pope Urban VIII, about A.D. 1626.

This plan of Drei is most valuable, though not accurate in detail. It marks the position of some of the graves which were found, but not of all that were disclosed in the second series of discoveries under Urban VIII. It was not issued until A.D. 1635. This later date explains the corrections which have been inserted.

PART II

TWO EXAMPLES OF RECENT DISCOVERIES

CRYPT OF S. CECILIA—THE BURIAL-PLACES OF S. FELICITAS, OF JANUARIUS, AND OF HER OTHER SONS

I

OUT of the many pages of Catacomb lore, the story of the Crypt of S. Cecilia and its recent discovery, and the identification of the burial-places of S. Felicitas and her seven sons, have been selected to be told here as specially interesting examples of the historical and theological importance of these investigations among the forgotten cemeteries of subterranean Rome.

Allard's words in his edition of Northcote and Brownlow's exhaustive résumé of a portion of De Rossi's monumental work, deserve quoting. Writing of S. Cecilia, he says:

"Les découvertes modernes l'ont bien vengée du scepticisme ou de la prudence excessive de Tillemont: on sait aujourd'hui que Sainte Cecile n'est ni un mythe, ni une martyre venue de Sicile, mais une vraie Romaine, du plus par sang romain; sa noble et gracieuse figure est décidément sortie des brumes de la légende pour entrer dans le plein jour de l'histoire."

The "Acts" of her martyrdom in their present form are probably not older than the fifth century, although S. Cecilia suffered in the reign of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, *circa* A.D. 177. But these "Acts" are undoubtedly very largely based upon a contemporaneous record: the recent discoveries have enabled historical criticism fairly to restore what was original in the story of the martyr.

Cecilia was a noble Roman lady, who belonged to a family of senatorial rank ; her father apparently was a pagan, or if a Christian at all was a man of the world rather than an earnest believer, for he gave his daughter in marriage to a young patrician, one Valerianus, a pagan, but a pagan of the highest character. Cecilia was a devoted Christian : at once she induced her husband and his brother Tiburtius to abjure idolatry. Accused of Christianity at a moment when the Government of the Emperor Marcus was determined to stamp out the fast-growing religion of Jesus, the two brothers were condemned to death, and they suffered martyrdom in company with the Roman officer who presided at their execution, and who, beholding the constancy of the two young patricians, embraced the faith which had enabled them to witness their good confession.

Cecilia shared in their condemnation. The Government, however, dreading the example of the death of so prominent a personage in Roman society, determined to put her to death as privately as possible. She was doomed to die in her own palace. The furnaces which heated the baths were heated far beyond the usual extent, and Cecilia was exposed to the deadly and suffocating fumes. These failed in their effect : after being exposed in her chamber for a night and a day to these fumes, she was still living, apparently unharmed. The Prefect of the city, who was in charge of Cecilia's execution, then gave orders to a lictor to decapitate the young Christian lady who persistently refused to abjure her religion.

There is nothing improbable in the story, which goes on to relate how the executioner, unnerved with his grim task, inflicted three mortal wounds, but Cecilia, though dying, yet breathed and preserved consciousness.

The Roman law forbade more than three strokes with the sword, and she lived on for two days and nights, during which long protracted agony she was visited by her friends, among whom was a Bishop Urbanus, not the Urbanus Bishop of Rome, as the " Acts " with some confusion tell us, but another Urbanus, probably a prelate of some smaller see.

After she had passed away, her body with all care and reverence was laid in a sepulchral chamber which subse-

quently became part of the great Cemetery of Callistus. The martyr was interred evidently in a vault or crypt which belonged to her illustrious family; several inscriptions belonging to Christian members of the gens Cæcilia have been found in the immediate vicinity of S. Cecilia's grave. Less than a quarter of a century after her martyrdom, the subterranean cemetery in which the Cæcilian vault was situated became part of the general property of the Roman congregations. Callistus, afterwards Bishop of Rome, held a high office under Bishop Zephyrinus, and he was set over the cemetery, which was subsequently called after him, the Cemetery of Callistus. At the beginning of the third century—as in the Vatican Crypt, where the earliest Bishops of Rome had been deposited round the body of S. Peter, there was no more room for interments—Callistus arranged the sepulchral chamber known as the Papal Crypt to be the official burying-place of the Bishops of Rome. The chamber in which S. Cecilia was laid was close by this Papal Crypt. De Rossi graphically expresses this: "Ce n'est donc pas sainte Cecile qui fut enterrée parmi les Papes, c'est elle au contraire qui fit aux Papes du III^me^ siècle les honneurs de sa demeure funèbre." (From Allard.)

. . . . . .

We will trace the story of the celebrated Roman saint through the ages.

The statement contained in the "Acts of S. Cecilia" of her interment in the Cemetery of S. Callistus no doubt is accurate, although the hand of a somewhat later "redactor" is manifest, for the cemetery only obtained its title of "Callistus" some thirty years after the martyrdom of the saint. S. Cecilia at once seems to have won a prominent place among the martyrs and confessors of the persecution of Marcus Aurelius. This is accounted for not only by the dramatic scenes which a generally accepted tradition tells us were the accompanying features of her passion, but also by the high rank and position of the sufferer and her generous bequest to the Roman congregations.

Towards the close of the fourth century S. Cecilia's crypt was among the popular sanctuaries specially cared for by Pope Damasus, much of whose work is still, in spite of centuries

of neglect, clearly visible. Damasus' work here was by no means confined to decoration, but included elaborate arrangements for the visits of pilgrims to the shrine, such as a special staircase and considerable masonry work to secure the walls and approaches. Somewhat later, Pope Sixtus III, A.D. 432–40, continued and amplified the decoration and constructive improvements of his predecessor Damasus.

The decorations and paintings of this crypt, as at present visible, clearly date from the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. De Rossi considers that the existence of these successive decorations, and the fact that various works, constructive as well as ornamental, were evidently at different epochs executed here, tell us that this is an historic sepulchral chamber highly venerated by many generations of pilgrim visitors.

From very early times, most probably from the days of the Emperor Marcus, there has been a church traditionally constructed on the site of an ancient house, the house of the martyr Valerian, Cecilia's husband. Recent investigations have gone far to substantiate the ancient tradition, for beneath the existing Church of S. Cecilia portions of an important Roman house of the second century have come to light.

The church, originally a private house of prayer, at a very remote period became a public basilica. It had fallen into a ruinous condition, and was rebuilt by Pope Paschal I in the ninth century. This restoration of the old basilican church no doubt suggested to Paschal his inquiry after the remains of the loved martyr in whose memory the church had been originally dedicated. The dramatic and well-authenticated story of the finding of the body by Paschal is as follows :

II

The great translation of the remains of the 2300 martyrs and confessors from the catacombs into the city for the sake of protecting these precious relics from barbarian pillage took place in the days of Pope Paschal I (ninth century). When this translation was going on, Paschal made an inquiry after the burying-place of S. Cecilia. Although the lengthy entry in the *Liber Pontificalis* makes no mention of any special

A REPLICA OF MADERNO'S EFFIGY OF S. CECILIA—AS SHE WAS FOUND—IS IN THE NICHE OF THE S. CALLISTUS CATACOMB CHAMBER—WHERE THE BODY ORIGINALLY WAS DEPOSITED

reason for this investigation, there is no doubt but that the restoration work which was being carried on at the basilica of the saint across the Tiber suggested it to the Pope. The tomb of the famous saint could not be found, although for centuries it had been emphatically alluded to in several of the Pilgrim Itineraries, and in the yet more ancient " Guide," subsequently copied by William of Malmesbury several centuries later.

It was about the year of grace 821, after long and fruitless searching for the lost tomb, and when he had come to the conclusion that the body of S. Cecilia had been carried away probably by Astolphus and the Lombards in their destructive raids, and that the tomb had been destroyed, that Pope Paschal early one morning, while listening to the singing of the Psalms in the great Vatican Basilica, fell asleep ; as he slept he saw the form of a saint in glory ; she disclosed her name, " Cecilia," and told him where [1] to look for her tomb.

Acting upon the words of the saint in the vision, he found at once the lost tomb, and when the coffin of cypress wood was opened, the body of Cecilia was seen unchanged, still wrapped in the gold-embroidered robe in which she had been clothed when her loving friends laid her to rest after her martyrdom, with the linen cloths stained with her blood folded together at her feet.

She lay in the position in which she had passed away. Those who had buried her, left her thus—not lying upon the back like a body in a tomb, but upon the right side, with her knees drawn together and her face turned away—her arms stretched out before her. In her touching and graceful attitude she seemed as though she was quietly sleeping.

Just as he found her, in the same coffin with the robe of golden tissue and the blood-stained linen folded by her feet,

[1] The text of the *Liber Pontificalis* mentions the Cemetery of Prætextatus as the site of the lost tomb. It was there where her husband Valerian and his brother and the officer Maximus had been buried. Duchesne, the learned editor of the *Liber Pontificalis*, suggests that the body of S. Cecilia had been removed from its original resting-place in the Crypt of S. Callistus, and had been secretly placed for safety's sake in the Cemetery of Prætextatus. De Rossi, however, and later Marucchi, believe that the Cemetery of Prætextatus, through an error in the *Liber Pontificalis*, had been written for " Cemetery of Callistus."

Pope Paschal reverently deposited her in a crypt beneath the altar of her church in the Trastevere district, simply covering the body with a thin veil of silk.

Nearly eight hundred years after (A.D. 1599), Sfondrati, titular Cardinal of the Church, while carrying out some works of restoration and repair in this ancient Church of S. Cecilia, came upon a large crypt under the high altar. In the crypt were two ancient marble sarcophagi. Responsible witnesses were summoned, and in their presence the sarcophagi were carefully opened. In one of these the body of S. Cecilia lay just as it had been seen eight centuries before by Pope Paschal I —in the same pathetic attitude, robed in gold tissue with the linen cloths blood-stained at her feet.

Every care was taken by the reigning Pope Clement VIII to provide careful witnesses of this strange discovery; among these were the famous scholars Cardinal Baronius and Bosio; the greatest artist of the day, Stefano Maderno, was summoned to view the dead saint and to execute the beautiful marble portrait which now lies in the recess of the Confession beneath the high altar of the well-known church in the Trastevere at Rome. In an inscription, Maderno, the artist, tells how he saw Cecilia lying incorrupt and unchanged in her tomb, and how in the marble he has represented the saint just as he saw her.[1]

[1] The writer of this book simply tells the story as it has been handed down and often repeated. From the clear testimony of the responsible and eminent witnesses above referred to—such men as Baronius, Bosio, and Maderno—there seems little doubt but that they had looked upon the hallowed remains resting as Maderno in his marble portrait has depicted her. De Rossi and others seem to represent the state of the body as though it had been miraculously preserved; the truth probably is that the body of Cecilia had been carefully and skilfully embalmed owing to the loving care of her friends, and laid in the peculiar position in which she breathed her last. The high rank and great wealth of her family, and the usual gentle and humane practice of the Roman Government in the case of those who had been judicially put to death, would bear out this explanation. No expense would have been deemed too great by the powerful family of Cecilia to do honour to her precious remains.

Of the enduring "popularity"—to use a commonplace expression—of S. Cecilia, the fact of Cecilia being one of the few chosen female saints daily commemorated in the canon of the Mass, may be fairly adduced. She is classed with Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucia, Anastasia, and Agnes.

It is often asked why she is looked on as the patroness of music. Nothing

The second sarcophagus found by Cardinal Sfondrati in the crypt of the Church of S. Cecilia beneath the high altar, was also opened by him. It was found to contain the bodies of three men, who had clearly suffered violent deaths—two of them had been decapitated, and the third had evidently been beaten to death by a horrible means of torture sometimes used —the "plumbatæ"—leathern or metal thongs loaded with lead; one of these, which evidently had been used in the death-scene of a martyr, was found in a crypt of this cemetery. These three were no doubt the remains of SS. Valerianus (the patrician husband of S. Cecilia), Tiburtius his brother, and the Roman officer Maximus, whose remains, brought no doubt by Pope Paschal I from the Prætextatus Cemetery where we know they had been interred, were deposited by him in the crypt of the Church of S. Cecilia close to the body of the famous martyr with whom they were so closely and gloriously connected.

The story of the discovery and certain identification of the original sepulchral chamber of S. Cecilia is vividly told by De Rossi with great detail. It was one of his important "finds." With the tradition before him—with the clear references in the pilgrim traditions—the great archæologist was sure that somewhere in the immediate vicinity of the sepulchral chamber of the Popes or Bishops of Rome of the

but pure tradition can be alleged here, but the tradition is a very ancient one. Wordsworth writes of her as

"rapt Cecilia, seraph-haunted queen of harmony."

Compare too references in Dryden, "Alexander's Feast," and Pope, "Ode on S. Cecilia." Raffaelle paints her as wrapped in ecstasy and surrounded by instruments of music.

The tradition is that when Valerian, her husband, returned from baptism, he found her singing hymns of thanksgiving for his conversion. Angels, it is said, descended from heaven to listen to her sweet voice.

No allusion, however, to her musical power is made in the Antiphone sung at her Festival. A verse of the appointed anthem runs thus:

"While the instruments of music were playing, Cecilia sang unto the Lord and said, 'Let my heart be undefiled, that I may never be confounded.'"

In one of the chapels of the great Church of the Oratory in London there is a beautiful replica of the dead Cecilia of Maderno.

There is another replica of Maderno's figure now placed in the niche of the recently-discovered crypt of S. Cecilia, where the sarcophagus which contains the body of the saint originally was placed.

third century, must be sought the crypt where S. Cecilia lay for more than six centuries.

First he discovered that adjoining the official Papal Crypt was another chamber, evidently of considerable size, in which a luminare [1] had been constructed, but the chamber and the luminare were choked up with earth and ruins. He proceeded to excavate the latter; as the work proceeded, the explorers in the neighbourhood of the chamber came upon the remains of paintings.

Lower down, almost on the level of the chamber, these paintings became more numerous and more distinct. The work of digging out went on slowly; more paintings had evidently once decorated that ruined and desolate chamber of death—one of them, a woman richly dressed, obviously represented S. Cecilia. Another of a bishop inscribed with the name of S. Urbanus, the bishop connected with the story of the saint. The paintings were of different dates, some as late as the seventh century. A door which once led into the Papal Crypt was found: remains of much and elaborate decorative work were plainly discerned, work of various ages, belonging some of it to the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries.

In one of the walls of the chamber a large opening had been originally constructed to receive the sarcophagus of the martyr.

All showed clearly that this had once been a very famous historic crypt, the resort of many generations of pilgrims, and its situation answered exactly to what we read in the Pilgrim Itineraries, in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and in other ancient authorities as the situation of the original burying-place of S. Cecilia. The subjects, too, of the dim discoloured paintings pointed to the same conclusion.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the sepulchral chamber De Rossi counted some twelve or thirteen inscriptions telling of Christian members of the "gens Cæcilia" who had been buried there—all testifying to the fact that originally this

[1] A "luminare" (plural "luminaria") was a shaft communicating with the surface of the ground which admitted light and air. Many of these were constructed by Pope Damasus in the fourth century for the sake of pilgrims visiting the historic crypts.

portion of the great group of the so-called "Callistus" Catacomb was the property of the noble house in question, and that probably at an early date it had been made over to the Christian Church in Rome. The saint and martyr therefore had been laid amidst the graves of other members of her family.[1]

In the chain of testimony which has been brought together one link seems to call for an elucidation. How is it that Pope Paschal I failed at first to discover the sepulchral chamber of S. Cecilia, considering it lay so close to the famous Papal Crypt, and in fact communicated with it? The answer is that no doubt at some time previous to his research the crypt of S. Cecilia had certainly been "walled up," "earthed up," or otherwise concealed to protect this revered sanctuary from the prying eyes and sacrilegious hands of Lombards and other barbarian raiders. It must be remembered that for centuries the tomb of S. Cecilia had been one of the principal objects of veneration in this great cemetery. Signs of this later work of concealment were also discovered by De Rossi.

De Rossi, in his summing up, comes to the conclusion that no doubt whatever rests upon the identification of the original burying-place of S. Cecilia, and that the sepulchral chamber discovered by him adjoining the Papal Crypt was the spot where her sarcophagus lay for centuries—the actual chamber which was subsequently adorned and made accessible by Pope Damasus; which was further decorated by several of his successors in the papacy; and which was visited and venerated by successive generations of pilgrims from all lands.

In the ninth century the sarcophagus containing the sacred remains was translated as we have seen by Pope Paschal I, and brought to the ancient Basilica of S. Cecilia in the Trastevere, where it has rested securely ever since. In the year 1699 it was seen and opened and its precious contents inspected by Pope Clement VIII, by Cardinal Sfondrati, by Cardinal Baronius, by Bosio and others, as we have related.

[1] In support of this conclusion, above ground, over this area of the great "Callistus" Cemetery, important Columbaria have been found belonging to the "gens Cæcilia." Thus long before S. Cecilia's time the spot had been evidently the burying-place of the illustrious house to which she belonged.

After the translation in the ninth century, the original crypt, in common with so many of the catacomb sanctuaries, was deserted and allowed to go to ruin—utterly forgotten until De Rossi rediscovered it and reconstructed its wonderful history.

Writing in the earlier years of the twentieth century, Marucchi, the follower and pupil of De Rossi, in his latest work on the Catacombs, reviews and fully endorses the conclusions of his great master on the question of the tradition of S. Cecilia's tomb.

What we stated at the beginning of this little study is surely amply verified. S. Cecilia and her story no longer belong to mere vague and ancient tradition, but live in the pages of scientific history.

III

We will cite another example, and a yet more striking one, of the light thrown by the witness of the catacombs on important questions which have been gravely disputed, in connection with the history of the very early years of Christianity.

Ecclesiastical historians of the highest rank have gravely doubted the truth of the story of the martyrdom of S. Felicitas and her seven sons [1] in the days of the Emperor Marcus about the middle of the second century. The splendid constancy in the faith of the mother and of her hero sons, in the opinion of these grave and competent critics was a recital almost entirely copied from the record of the Maccabean mother and her seven brave sons, and so the Passion of S. Felicitas and her sons has been generally consigned to the shelf of early legendary Christian history; few historians would venture to quote as genuine this pathetic and inspiring chapter of the persecution of the Emperor Marcus. It is regarded as a piece of literature, devised in the sixth century or even later, and quite outside serious history.

But recent investigations in the great subterranean city of the Roman dead have completely changed this commonly held view, and the episode in question must now take its place among the acknowledged Christian records of the

[1] The eldest of the "seven" was the well-known S. Januarius.

middle of the second century. She belonged to the ranks of the great ladies of Rome ; her husband, of whom we know nothing, was dead, but Felicitas and her sons were well known in the Christian community of the capital, where she was distinguished for her earnest and devoted piety.

Her high rank gave her considerable influence, and she was in consequence dreaded by the pagan pontiffs. These high officials, aware of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus' hostility to the Christians, laid an information against the noble Christian lady as belonging to the unlawful religion. They represented her as stirring up the wrath of the immortal gods by her powerful influence among the people. Marcus at once directed the Prefect of the city, Publius, to see that Felicitas and her sons sacrificed in public to the offended deities. This was in the year of grace 162.

The "Acts of the Passion," from which we are quoting here, no doubt with very little change represent the official notes or *procès-verbal* of the interrogatory at the trial.

The Prefect Publius at first with great gentleness urged her to sacrifice, and then finding her obdurate, threatened her with a public execution.

Finding persuasion and threats of no avail, Publius urged her, "If she found it pleasant to die, at least to let her sons live." Felicitas replied that they would most certainly live if they refused to sacrifice to idols, but if they did sacrifice, they would surely die—eternally.

The public trial subsequently took place in the open Forum ; again the Roman magistrate urged the mother to be pitiful to her sons, still in the flower of their youth, but the brave confessor, turning to the young men, told them to look up to heaven—there Christ with His saints was waiting for them : "Fight," she said, "my sons, the good fight for your souls."

The young men in turn were placed before him. The Prefect in the name of the Emperor offered them each a splendid guerdon and coveted privileges at the Imperial court if they would only consent to sacrifice publicly to the gods of Rome. One and all of the seven refused, preferring to die with their noble mother, choosing the other guerdon, the

alternative guerdon offered in the name of the great Emperor, the fearful and shameful deaths to which an openly professing Christian in the days of Marcus was condemned by the stern Roman law.

The interrogatory and the noble answers of mother and sons as contained in the "Acts of the Passion of S. Felicitas," are at once a stirring and pathetic recital.

The final condemnation naturally followed. The death sentences were confirmed by the Emperor, and sternly carried out.

Felicitas and her seven sons suffered martyrdom,[1] and through pain and agony passed to their rest and bliss in the Paradise of their adored Master Christ.

Around these "Acts" a continual war of criticism has been waged: the question has by no means as yet been positively decided.

Tillemont hesitatingly expresses an opinion that they have not all the characteristics of genuine "Acts." Bishop Lightfoot is yet more positive in his view that they are not authentic. Aubé repeats a similar judgment. On the other hand, De Rossi, Borghesi, and Doulcet accept them as genuine. But all are agreed that they are very ancient. The interrogatory portion is no doubt a verbatim extract from the original *procès-verbal*.

The piece appears to have been originally largely written in Greek, but Gregory the Great, who refers to it, speaks of another and better text which we do not possess. One striking indication of its great antiquity is that no mention is made of the tombs of the martyrs. Had these "Acts" dated even from the fifth century this would not have been omitted, for in the fifth century the martyrdoms had obtained great celebrity.

A very early mention of these tombs, however, we find in the so-called "Liberian" or "Philocalian" Catalogue,

[1] The manner of death of this illustrious family of Christian martyrs was as follows, as far as we can gather from the concise notices in the "Acts":

Januarius, the eldest, was beaten to death by whips loaded with lead.

The second and third brothers apparently met with the same doom.

The fourth was thrown down from a height, and so died.

The three remaining brothers and their mother Felicitas were dealt with more mercifully and were decapitated.

which was partly composed or put together not later than the year of grace 334. The alternative name of the Catalogue is derived from Filocalus, the famous calligrapher of Pope Damasus, who most probably was the compiler of the work, which consists of several tracts chronological and topographical of the highest interest, some originally doubtless composed at a very early date. It contains, among other pieces, a Catalogue of Roman Bishops, ending with Liberius, and a piece termed "Depositio Martyrum," in which the burying-places of the seven sons of Felicitas are carefully set out. This ancient memorandum has been of the greatest assistance to De Rossi and Marucchi in their identification of the original graves of the "seven."

When De Rossi had penetrated into the cemetery of Prætextatus on the Appian Way, he came upon what was evidently a highly decorated chamber, once lined with marble, and carefully built and ornamented. It was, he saw, an historic crypt of the highest interest. The vault of the chamber was painted, and the fresco decorations were still fairly preserved. The paintings represented garlands of vines and laurels and roses, executed with great taste and care; the style and execution belonged to work which must be dated not later than the second century. Below the beautifully decorated vault was a long fresco painting of the Good Shepherd with sheep; one sheep was on his shoulders. This painting has been sadly interfered with by a loculus, or grave, of later date, probably of the fourth or fifth century; on the loculus in question could still be read the following little inscription—perfect save for the first few letters:

. . MI RIFRIGERI JANUARIUS AGATOPUS FELICISSIM
. . . MARTYRES

Some sixth-century Christians, anxious to lay their beloved dead close to the martyrs, had caused the wall of the chamber to be cut away, for the reception of the body, regardless of the painting, and then while the plaster was still fresh had cut these words of prayer, which may be translated, "May Januarius, Agatopus,[1] and Felicissimus refresh (the soul of . . .)."

[1] Agapitus is so spelt in the rough graffite here referred to.

Agatopus and Felicissimus were two of the deacons of Pope Sixtus II, who had (probably in the same catacomb) suffered martyrdom, A.D. 258. Their sepulchral chambers were subsequently identified.

The question at once presented itself to De Rossi—was not this chamber ornamented with paintings clearly of the second century, the crypt where S. Januarius had been laid? All doubt on this point was subsequently cleared up, for eventually in many fragments the original inscription which Pope Damasus had caused to be placed over the door or near the altar was found. The inscription ran thus :

BEATISSIMO · MARTYRI
JANUARIO
DAMASUS · EPISCOP ·
FECIT

The body of S. Felicitas the mother was laid in the cemetery in the Via Salaria Nova which bears her name. After the Peace of the Church towards the end of the first quarter of the fourth century, a little basilica was erected over the spot in the catacomb in question where the remains of the martyred mother had been deposited. As late as A.D. 1884, while digging the foundations of a house, the little basilica was discovered—in Marucchi's words, " on y reconnut aussitôt le tombeau de S^te^ Felicité." Paintings of the mother and her sons adorn the walls. Beneath the basilica was a crypt in which the Salzburg Itinerary tells us lay her youngest son S. Silanus : the words of this Pilgrim Itinerary run thus : " Illa pausat in ecclesia sursum et filius ejus sub terra deorsum."

At the end of the eighth century Pope Leo III translated the remains of the mother and son to the Church of S. Suzanna, near the Baths of Diocletian, where they still rest.

In the Philocalian or Liberian Calendar, A.D. *circa* 334, an entry appears under the heading of " Depositio Martyrum," telling how two more of the seven martyred sons of Felicitas were buried in the Cemetery of S. Priscilla, namely, SS. Felix and Philip.

After the Peace of the Church, the basilica subsequently known as S. Sylvester was erected over a portion of the great

Priscilla Cemetery, and many of the bodies of the more famous martyrs were brought up from the subterranean galleries and chambers and buried in conspicuous places in the new Basilica of S. Sylvester ; amongst these were the remains of the two sons of Felicitas, SS. Felix and Philip. This is carefully described in the Pilgrim Itineraries or Guides. These two well-known martyrs were deposited under the high altar of S. Sylvester. In the second Salzburg Itinerary, known as " De locis SS. Martyrum," they are thus specially mentioned : " S. Felicis [*sic*] unus de septem et S. Philippus unus de septem," and in William of Malmesbury, copying from a much older Itinerary, we read, " Basilica S. Silvester ubi jacet marmoreo tumulo co-opertus . . . Martyres . . . Philippus et Felix." Marucchi thinks he can point out the tomb in the subterranean crypt where the two originally were laid.

The three remaining sons of Felicitas, namely, SS. Alexander, Vitalis, and Martialis, were interred in the cemetery of the Jordani on the Via Salaria Nova. This cemetery, owing to its state of ruin and the difficulty of pursuing the excavating work, has only been very partially explored ; but Marucchi believes he has found a broken inscription referring to " Alexander, one of the seven brothers." It is probable that other traces of the loculi of these three will come to light when this large but comparatively little known catacomb, which is in a very ruinous and desolate condition, is carefully examined : at present large portions of it are quite inaccessible.

The second Salzburg Itinerary " De locis SS. Martyrum " specially guides the pilgrim to tombs of these three thus : " propeque ibi " (alluding to the Basilica of S. Chrysanthus and Daria built over a portion of the Cœmeterium Jordani) " S. Alexander et S. Vitalis, sanctusque Martialis qui sunt tres de septem filiis Felicitatis . . . jacent." William of Malmesbury in his transcript of an ancient Itinerary also mentions them, as do other of the Pilgrim Guides.

In the celebrated " Monza " Catalogue and in the " Pittacia," or small labels, belonging to the phials which contained a little of the sacred oils which were burnt before the tombs of the more eminent confessors and martyrs (the phials of oils which were sent by Pope Gregory the Great

(A.D. 590–604) to Theodelinda the Lombard Queen), the names of Felicitas and six of her martyred sons occur.

In the " Pittacia " or labels they are grouped topographically together, as we have given them above, Felicitas' being in a separate label, Januarius also in a separate label, then the two groups together as above, the " two " and the " three." There is a reason for S. Silanus, who was buried with his mother in the cemetery named after her, being absent from this " Monza " Catalogue, and from the labels on the phials of oil. His body, as the " Liberian " Catalogue informs us, was missing for a season from its original loculus, it having been stolen away, but was subsequently recovered and replaced.

The suspicion of the legendary character of the story of the martyrdom of S. Felicitas and her seven sons is largely traceable to the conclusions of some critical scholars (by no means of all) that the " Acts of S. Felicitas " and her sons are not authentic, that is, that they are not a contemporary piece, but were compiled at a somewhat later and uncertain date. It is, however, by the most trustworthy of these critics conceded that they are very ancient.

But granting these conclusions are accurate and that the " Acts," in the strict sense of the word, are not authentic, the circumstances of the Passion and the martyrdom of the mother and her heroic sons rest on other authorities outside and quite independent of the " Acts "—authorities of the highest value and absolutely unquestioned.

Of these the testimony of the catacomb tombs of the mother and her seven sons, a somewhat novel witness, is the one we have especially brought forward here.

It is an evidence unchangeable, and which admits of no subsequent revision or addition. In its special department it is perhaps the strongest piece of testimony that can be brought forward, and much of this strange unexpected witness was unknown until quite lately—until these forgotten cemeteries were partially explored by competent and indefatigable scholars of our own day and time.

There are, besides, other important " pieces," which for want of space have not been quoted here, bearing on the same

subject, namely, on the historical existence of S. Felicitas and her seven sons, and their brave witness and consequent martyrdom in the days of the Emperor Marcus Antonius, such as, inscriptions of Pope Damasus, a homily in honour of S. Felicitas by Pope Gregory the Great, and a laudatory notice by S. Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Ravenna, A.D. 433–54, etc.

PART III

EPITAPHS AND INSCRIPTIONS FOUND IN THE CATACOMBS

I

IN this section we will give at some length what these (same) catacombs tell us of the *thoughts* of the early Christian congregations on some of the more important problems dealing with death and with the life beyond the grave, and incidentally with the early Christian view on the question of the communion of saints.

The scanty remains of the literature of this early period, as we have already hinted, valuable though they are, partake rather of the nature of scholars' researches and conclusions. What we find painted and graved on the million graves of this vast subterranean God's Acre tells us in simple popular language exactly what the Christian folk, who lived and worked and suffered in the two centuries which followed the martyrdom of SS. Peter and Paul, thought and felt on these momentous points.

The graves in this silent city, perhaps numbering some three, four, or even five millions, belong to all ages, to every rank and order. There are crypts containing the remains of members of the Imperial family, of men and women of senatorial and of the most exalted rank among the proud patrician houses. There are graves of merchants and traders, of the very rich, of the very poor ; there are innumerable graves of freedmen, of the vast class too of the sad-eyed slave.

Here, too, are not a few tombs of men and women who gave up all, even dear life, for the Name's sake, and who, because they professed unswerving faith in the divine Son of

God, through pain and agony passed to their rest in the Paradise of God.

Some of the ruined graves were once strikingly adorned; very many of them being made of costly marbles and beautifully decorated, while around these sepulchral memorials of the great and wealthy are found numberless graves roughly though lovingly fashioned.

Of the epitaphs and inscriptions carved and painted on these graves, some are exquisitely worked, evidently by professional artists. Many more, however, were rudely and hurriedly painted or scratched on the plaster or stone tablet which closed in the shelf in the wall in which the dead was laid.

The inscriptions are for the most part in Latin, but in the first and in much of the second century the words are often in Greek. In some instances the two languages are curiously mingled, the epitaph beginning in one tongue and ending in another: occasionally the Latin words are written in Greek characters.

Various corrupt ways of spelling are not unusual, the ordinary rules of grammar are not unfrequently broken. Indeed, as is observable in some of the Latin poetry of the early Christian centuries where the rules of classical prosody are ignored, so here in the prose used by the children of the people a similar disregard of language and spelling is observable. It was the beginning of the popular patois which eventually crystallized into modern Italian.

There is a curious and interesting difference between the epitaphs of the catacombs written when Christianity was a proscribed religion, when those who embraced it were liable to more or less bitter persecution, and the epitaphs of the latter years of the fourth as of the following centuries. Men wrote in those first three Christian centuries in the dark and lonely corridors and chambers where their loved dead were laid, not for any human eye to read, save their own when they visited that sacred God's Acre,—just a name—or an emblem of their dearest hopes, a little picture of the Good Shepherd and His sheep, a word or two of sure hope and joyous confidence in the eternal future—and nothing more.

Very short, very simple, very touching are these early Christian epitaphs. The great and noble set out no pompous statement of the rank and position of their dead: we read little of the piety and goodness of the many saintly ones whose remains rested in those long silent corridors.

But in the cemeteries (mostly above ground) of the last years of the fourth and in the following centuries, when the Church enjoyed peace, and when a different spirit brooded over the works and days of Christians, we begin to meet with those foolish tasteless phrases which as time went on became more and more in fashion, telling of the dead one's rank and position, of the goodness and holiness and devotion of the deceased.

Dean Stanley quotes an epitaph in the cloisters of his loved Abbey of Westminster, which he says reminded him of the catacomb inscriptions in a way which none other of the pompous and elaborate epitaphs in that noble English home of the great dead had done. It is of a little girl, and runs thus:

"Jane Lister · deare childe."

The first and most prominent feature in the life of the Christians of the first three centuries which the inscriptions of the catacombs make clear to us was their intense conviction of the reality of the future life.

The epitaphs speak of the dead as though they were still living. They *talk* to the dead. They felt that there was a communion still existing with them—between them and the survivors—a communion carried on under new conditions, and finding its consolation in incessant mutual prayer.

They were assured that the soul of the departed was united with the saints—that it was with God, and in the enjoyment of peace, happiness, rest; so often the little epitaph breathes a humble and loving prayer that they, the survivors, might soon be admitted to a participation in these blessings. Sometimes the survivors invoked the help of the prayers of the departed, since they knew that the soul of the departed lived in God and with God; they thought that the prayers of a soul in the presence of God would be a help—must be a help—to those whose time of trial was not yet ended.

Dr. Northcote well summarizes all this: "In a word, they realized most intensely that all the faithful, whether in the body or out of the body, were still living members of one mystical body, the body of Christ; that they formed one great family, knit together in the closest bonds of love; and that this love, stronger than death, had its proper work and happiness in prayer—prayer of the survivors for those who had gone before, prayer of the blessed for those who were left behind." (*Epitaphs of the Catacombs*, chap. v.)

This deeply rooted belief in the life beyond the grave; this intense conviction that the division between this life and the life beyond the grave does not sever the claim of affection and love, never interrupt—no, not for an hour—the interchange of loving offices.

We will quote a very few of the older epitaphs painted or graved upon the marble or stone tablet or on the thick plaster-work which closed in the shelf in which the dead were deposited.

On some of these tablets we read simply the name of the dead; on others the name is accompanied with a Christian emblem, such as an anchor, the mystic fish, the ἰχθύς—each letter of which refers closely to the Saviour: (ι) Jesus, (χ) Christ, (θ) God, (ύ) the Son, (ς) the Saviour; the palm branch, the token of the victory over death; the dove, symbol of a Christian soul, occasionally of the Holy Ghost; this dove or bird was a favourite emblem of the soul, the idea being that the soul resembled a bird of passage dwelling for a season here and then flying away beyond the seas to a brighter, serener home. Very often we come upon the figure of the Good Shepherd, sometimes with a lamb in His arms.

II

De Rossi tells us how he had studied over fifteen thousand of these epitaphs, and that every year about five hundred more were deciphered. We will copy a very few of these:

"To dear Cyriacus—sweetest son—Mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit."

SEPULCHRAL INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

"Matronata—who lived a year and 32 days—Pray for thy parents."
"Bolosa—may God refresh thee—In Christ."
"Sweet Faustina—mayest thou live in God."
"Peace to thy soul, Oxycholis."
"Agape, thou shalt live for ever."
"Filumena—thy spirit is in peace."
"Baccis, sweet soul in the peace of the Lord, a virgin—Her father to his sweetest daughter."
"Victorina is in Peace and in Christ."
"Amerinus to his dearest wife Rufina; may God refresh thy spirit."
"His parents made this for their good and sweetest son Felix . . . May Christ receive thee in peace."
"Porcella sleeps here in peace."
"Severa; mayest thou live in God."
"Farewell, my dear one, in peace with the Holy souls; Farewell in Christ."

Never a word of sorrow on these graves of the dead—never a word of repining—never a regret that they have been taken away. Only just a few words telling of their sure hope for their dear ones, and a prayer to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit to keep them in their loving guardianship.

We must dwell a little on the question of the testimony which these epitaphs of the first age of Christianity bear on the practice of the living asking for the *help* of those who had passed within the veil. There is no doubt but that at a later period and all through the Middle Ages this was the practice, and it has led to results which true theologians generally deplore. The question here is—How far was this the practice of the Church of the first days?

Now there is no doubt whatever but that the mediæval Church from very early times taught that the prayers of great saints possessed a peculiar efficacy, and in the uneducated mind this shaded into something like a belief that these saints possessed some actual power of themselves to interfere in and to influence human affairs. We shall presently quote some of S. Augustine's views here.

In the case, however, of the early Christians whose thoughts are reflected in their great City of the Dead, the case was very different. They believed so intensely in the continuance of life after death that they maintained their communion with the departed by an interchange of prayers.

S. Cyprian, a great theologian and a cautious teacher, believed that the blessed dead were anxious for those whom they had left behind. Now, granting that this was the common feeling of Christians in respect to their dear dead ones whom they believed were dwelling close to God and His Christ, we can well conceive how natural it was for them to ask them for their prayers—for were they not dwelling close to God and His Christ to Whom their prayers must be addressed? Thus in the Church of the first two hundred and fifty years this communion, largely made up of the constant interchange of prayer between the living and the dead, rested on this family and friendship bond, and on no other. The formal invocation of saint and martyr as of some specially powerful soul belongs to a later date. It was not the teaching, certainly not the *general* teaching, of the Church of the catacombs.

But even in the catacombs it appears that very soon the custom crept in of crowding round the grave of some famous martyr, as though some special virtue belonged to the spot where the saint's remains had been deposited; and the little chamber where the hallowed remains of a hero or heroine of the faith lay, was soon filled with graves—graves excavated utterly without any regard to the paintings or decorations which adorned the chamber and its original tomb, paintings and decorations which were ruthlessly cut away to make room for new loculi where the dead might rest close to the remains of the saint or martyr.[1]

The point, however, which especially concerns us here is the testimony, repeated many thousand times, which the

[1] S. Augustine in the first quarter of the fifth century, *circa* A.D. 421, in reply to a question addressed to him by S. Paulinus of Nola, discusses the question whether or not is it advantageous to be buried close to the grave of a saint? The little work of Augustine, however, broadens out into points connected with the doctrine of "Invocation of Saints." A résumé of some of S. Augustine's thoughts and arguments will be found in a short Appendix to this chapter.

catacombs bear to the perfect confidence of the early Christians in the continuance of life beyond the grave. To the faithful dead—to the believers in Jesus Christ—there was no break caused by death, for them life went on as it had done aforetime ; conscious life went on after death, only under different and happier conditions.

To appreciate the striking change in the conception of death—the most important event in the life of man on earth—it will be interesting to glance at the testimony supplied in the same period by pagan epitaphs. A very brief examination will suffice to show what an impassable gulf separated the Christian from the pagan conception.

What at once catches our attention in any study of pagan epitaphs is the complete want of any hope beyond the grave. All the elaborate pagan pictures of the future life popularized in Greek circles by the Homeric poems, and in Latin society by the exquisite verses of Vergil, when brought face to face with the stern reality of the tomb are simply blotted out—are treated as purely fables.

Death, in these pagan epitaphs, the true expressions of popular pagan belief in the first three centuries of the Christian era, is ever viewed as an enemy ; is described as an everlasting sleep, and the grave is represented as the last eternal home.

It has been well said that this melancholy idea was conveyed in the quiet sadness of that one word " Vale," or in the more impassioned repetition of it, " Vale, Vale dulcissima—semper in perpetuo vale." Farewell, farewell, sweetest one—for ever farewell. Now and again a favourite pagan formula was summed up in two words—" fuisti ; vale."

Some of the pagan epitaphs are playfully sarcastic, as : " Ah, weary traveller, however far you may walk, you must come here at last." Some even make a mock at death, bidding others enjoy themselves while they live. " Live for the present hour, drink and play, for you are sure of nothing, only what you eat and drink is really yours." " Fortune makes many promises but keeps none of them ; live then for the present hour, since nothing else is really yours." Some epitaphs are bitter : " I lived as I like, but I don't know why I died." " Here it is, so it is, nothing else could be."

Here an inscription on a young woman's grave mourns her early death: "I lift up my hands against the God who took me away at the age of twenty, though I had done no harm." A father thus grieves for the loss of his child: "The fates judged ill when they robbed me of you." Father and mother often write themselves down as most wretched, most unhappy ("miserrimi-infelicissimi"). Sometimes they use these sad and cheerless terms of their dead children. Mothers now and again describe themselves as "left to tears and groans," or as "condemned to perpetual darkness and daily sad lamentation." Parents lament their dead child thus: "Our hope was in our boy; now all is ashes and mourning." Frequently these mourn for their dead children as follows: "They have died without having deserved it." Another parent bewails the child's death in these terms: "Neither talent, nor amiability, nor loving winning ways, have been of any avail to prolong the child's days; in spite of all this, he has become the foul prey of the cruel Pluto."

On very many indeed of pagan tombs undoubtedly there is evidence of much love and deep affection for the departed, but there is no gleam of hope of reunion or of happiness in another life; indeed, as a rule, there is no other life hinted at. If any venture to look beyond the grave—which is rarely the case—all *beyond* the grave is dark and sad and melancholy.

The following words put into the mouth of a dead girl well voice this general feeling: "Here I lie, unhappy girl, in darkness." "Traveller, curse me not as you pass," moans another inscription, "for I am in darkness and cannot answer."

III

The wonderful change in popular feeling as shown in the Christian epitaphs when contrasted with the pagan epitaphs of the same period is indeed startling! What we read in the Roman City of the Dead tells us something of the spirit which dwelt in these companies of believers in the Name. This *something* is sufficient to account for the new life led by so many, for the superhuman courage displayed by the army of

martyrs and confessors, for the ultimate victory, some two hundred years later, of the religion of Jesus.

We who live in what is perhaps the evening of the world's story—we mark the glowing words of the New Testament writings, the fervid exhortations and noble resolves of men like Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp—the saintly teachings of great theologians like Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian.

And as we read, we feel that these writers were evidently intensely persuaded of the truth of such sublime and soul-stirring assertions; we know, too, that these writers and teachers lived the beautiful life they taught,—that they died, many of them, with a smile on their lips and a song in their hearts.

But what of the People—the common folk, the ordinary everyday citizen; the slave and the little trader of the thousand cities of the Empire, the soldier of Rome, and the patrician of Rome—what did *they* think of all this?—these new strange words, these sunlit hopes, these glorious golden promises of the great teachers of Christianity?

The catacombs give us the answer. In quite late years, slowly, painfully, the antiquary and the scholar have opened out the secrets of the long-hidden City of the Dead which lies all round immemorial Rome, and, thanks to their labours, from words and pictures graven and painted on a million graves, comes to us, across the many centuries, the answer with no uncertain voice.

Yes, the People—the slave and the trader, the soldier and the noble—believed the words of the New Testament writings, and accepted the teaching of the early Christian teachers, and believing, struggled to lead the life the Master loved. None for a moment would dare to doubt the mighty power of this strange weird testimony of a million tombs; it is indeed a voice from a thousand graves.

Then, too, what may be termed the terminology, that is the words and expressions used in these vast cemeteries for all that is connected with death and burial, teaches the same truth—that for a believer in the Name, all the gloom and dread and horror usually associated with death are absent in these short epitaphs.

The catacomb inscriptions and pictures, besides their overwhelming testimony to the belief of the early Christians in the continuance of life after death, in the immortality of the soul, a testimony expressed in a countless number of ways, bear their witness to some of the more important dogmas of the Christian faith.

. . . . . .

The extreme brevity of the inscriptions and the necessarily small space allotted to the pictures and emblems graven and painted on the sepulchral slabs, for the most part very small, of course preclude anything like any complete enunciation even of the principal Articles of the Christian faith: still what we find on these slabs tells us with no uncertain voice in whom these early congregations believed, and to whom these fervent prayers were addressed. Each of the Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity are named in many of these epitaphs.

We find many instances of the formula of the ancient creeds, "In God and in Christ." This distinct enumeration of the two first Persons of the Blessed Trinity bears witness to the Catholic faith of the composers of the epitaphs.

Nor is the Third Person of the Trinity absent from these epitaphs. We read on some for instance: "In the Holy Spirit of God"; "Mayest thou live in the Holy Spirit." Even the mention of all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity has been found engraved on these sepulchral tablets.

What, however, is most striking in these early records of the belief of the Christian congregation is the testimony they bear—a testimony repeated an innumerable number of times—to the primitive belief in the supreme Divinity of Jesus Christ. We find again and again such formulas as "In the name of Christ"; "In God the Lord Christ"; "In God Christ"; "The great God Christ" ("Deo Magno Christo"). In the earliest epitaphs the most common symbol is the fish, painted, carved, or written at the beginning or end of the epitaph, not as part of the sentence, but as a complete formula in itself. Now this was a declaration of faith in "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour"; the letters which form the Greek word

Ichthus, as we have explained, being the initials [1] of the words of this formula.

There is no doubt that from the earliest times the *fish* was an acknowledged symbol of our Lord. It became at once a sacred "tessera" or sign—quite unintelligible to the pagan and official world, but to the believer a most precious symbol, containing with striking brevity and yet with striking clearness, a complete précis, so to speak, of the creed, a profession of facts as far as related to the Saviour.

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The catacombs are full of Christ. It was to Him that the Christians of the age of persecution ever turned: it was on Him they rested—in gladness and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; in the days of danger—and these were sadly numerous in the first two centuries and a half—and in the hour of death. It was from His words they drew their strength. In the consciousness of His ever-presence in their midst, they suffered gladly for His sake. With His name on their lips they died fearlessly, joyfully passing into the Valley of the veiled Shadow. On the tablet of marble or plaster which closed up the narrow shelf in the catacomb corridor where their poor remains were reverently, lovingly laid, the dear name of Jesus was often painted or carved.

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The catacombs are full of Christ. We have spoken several times of the paintings on the walls and ceilings of the corridors and chambers. There is great variety of these, the Old and New Testament supplying the majority of subjects. But by far the favourite subject of representation—certainly the leading type of Christian art in the first days—was the figure of the "Good Shepherd." It does not only appear in the City

[1] The initial letters of the Redeemer's names and principal titles (in Greek) made up the word *ἰχθύς* or fish. Thus:

ΙΗCΟΥC = Jesus.
ΧPICTOC = Christ.
ΘΕΟΥ = of God.
ΥΙΟC = Son.
CΩΤΗP = Saviour.

of the Dead. It was often graved upon chalices used in the holy Eucharist. It was traced in gold upon glass, it was moulded upon lamps, it was carved upon rings. But it is to the catacombs that we must go to find it in its most varied and pathetic forms—now painted in fresco upon the walls of the corridors and chambers where the dead lie so thickly; now roughly, now more carefully carved on countless tablets; now sculptured upon the more costly sarcophagi.

Sometimes the Shepherd is represented with one sheep, at times with several; some listening to His voice—some turning listlessly away. We come upon it in a thousand places on the tombs themselves—in the little chapels or oratories leading out of the corridors where the more distinguished among the dead sleep. It is the favourite symbol of the Christian life and faith.

This constantly recurring figure of the Good Shepherd with His sheep in the catacombs throws much light on this deeply interesting and at the same time important question—What were the thoughts of that early Church in Rome respecting Christ and His teaching?

We must remember they lived very near the times when the greatest figure in history lived on earth, and talked with men. We shall do well to bear in mind that the first generation of these Roman Christians were taught by Peter and by Paul, and that through most of the second century men lived whose fathers must have seen and listened to these great servants of the Divine Master, certainly to their immediate disciples.

The form in which they loved best to think of this Almighty Saviour was as "the great Shepherd of the sheep"—the Shepherd of the First Epistle of S. Peter—the Shepherd of S. Luke and of S. John.[1]

A great and eloquent writer[2] in one of his most suggestive works does not hesitate to speak of what he terms the popular religion of the first Christians as the religion of "the Good

[1] See especially Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25–v. 4; S. Luke, xv. 4, 7, and above all S. John x. 11, 16.

[2] Dean Stanley of Westminster, *Christian Institutions*, chaps. xiii., xiv.

Shepherd." He says they looked on that figure and it conveyed to them all they wanted. And then he adds sorrowfully that "as ages passed on 'the image of the Good Shepherd' faded away from the mind of the Christian world, and other emblems of the Christian faith took the place of the once dearly loved figure."

"Instead of the good and gracious Pastor, there came the omnipotent Judge, or the Crucified Sufferer, or the Infant in His mother's arms, or the Master in His parting Supper."

All these later presentments of the Divine Saviour emphatically are beautiful and true, but they are *not* what the first Christians especially dwelt on. These loved to think of Him first and chiefest as "the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep."

Among the many pictured figures of the "Good Shepherd" in the catacomb sepulchral galleries, the Shepherd is occasionally represented with a kid or a goat in place of a sheep in His loving arms: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold, one shepherd." The catacomb theology, as expounded by the catacomb teachers, went beyond even these gracious words, when it represented the creature on the shoulders of the Master, as not a lamb but a kid—not a sheep but a goat. These Christians of the first day were persuaded that their Master's mission on earth was "not to repel but to include, not to condemn but to save; they believed in His tender compassion and boundless charity."[1]

This sweet and loving view provoked the indignant remonstrance of the stern Tertullian (*circa* A.D. 200). On this harsh

[1] Dean Stanley (*Christian Institutions*) calls attention to the curious fact that the popular religion of the first two centuries, as shown in the catacomb witnesses, ran, in some particulars, in different channels from the contemporary writers whose reliquiæ have been preserved, and also from the paintings and writers of a later period; for instance, the "Good Shepherd" is very little alluded to even by the writers of the second and third and fourth centuries; *e.g.* Irenæus and Justin, Athanasius and Cyprian. If we come down much later, scarcely any notices of the "Shepherd" occur in the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas; none in the Tridentine Catechism; none in the Anglican Thirty-nine Articles; none in the Westminster Confession.

protest of the great African Father Tertullian, Matthew Arnold founds one of his most touching poems :

> "He saves the sheep—the goats He doth not save:
> So spake the fierce Tertullian.
> But she sighed:
> The infant Church, of love she felt the tide
> Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave,
> And then she smil'd, and in the Catacombs,
> With eye suffused, but heart inspired true,
> She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew,
> And on His shoulder not a lamb but kid."

AN APPENDIX TO THE EPITAPHS, ETC., OF THE CATACOMBS

THE wish to be buried in the immediate vicinity of a saint or confessor, though perhaps especially marked in the subterranean cemeteries of Rome, was not peculiar to the Christians of the very early centuries. Many other instances could be quoted, from the days of the old prophet of Bethel who wished his bones to lie beside the bones of the man of God who came out of Judah (1 Kings xiii. 31) down to King John, who is said to have requested that he might be interred at Worcester directed between the bodies of SS. Oswald and Wulfstan.

S. Augustine's *De curâ pro mortuis gerendâ* is a peculiarly interesting treatise. The great bishop discusses at some length this question, and his words throw considerable sidelight upon the growing practice of the invocation of saints.

The treatise, written about A.D. 421, was a reply to a question addressed to him by S. Paulinus of Nola, a very saintly and devoted man, but at the same time, in common with not a few holy men of his time, superstitious and often sadly mistaken in his exaggerated devotion to the noble army of martyrs who had played so well the part of pioneers in the recent days of bitter persecution.

S. Paulinus had been asked by a certain widow to allow her son to be buried in the church of the martyr S. Felix at Nola. He said he had granted her prayer, believing that this longing desire of faithful souls that their dear ones should be laid close to the remains of a saint was based not merely on an illusion but on some real need of the soul. But S. Paulinus evidently was uncertain here, so he asks the great teacher Augustine—Did it really help one who was dead to be buried near a saint ?

S. Augustine's reply on the whole was cautious : he remarked that if a man had lived righteously, to be buried close to a saint

could not possibly be of any use to his soul; again, if his life had been evil, it would be equally useless.

Everything connected with the burial of the dead, Augustine concluded, has really more connexion with the survivors than with the dead. He explains this connexion thus: "When we think of the spot where our dear one lies, and that spot is in the immediate neighbourhood of the grave of a saint, we think at once of the saint in question, and we ask for his or her prayers for our dear dead one." But if such prayers be not asked for, Augustine sees no advantage in such a neighbourhood. (Adjuvat defuncti spiritum, non mortui corporis locus, sed ex loci memoria vivus affectus.)

The famous North African theologian then proceeds to discuss the question: "How do martyrs help men?" He says: that they do help them is certain; then, are these saints, through the virtue of the power they possess, present in many places, or are they always dwelling in the home allotted to them—far away from mortal dwellings, but at the same time praying for those who ask for their intercession? And he adds that, God hearing their prayers, through the ministry of angels, grants at His good pleasure to those who have sought the prayers of the saints, the consolations these saints ask for them.

This seems to be the substance of S. Augustine's reply to S. Paulinus of Nola, but he carefully guards his words by adding: "All this," namely, the extent of the power of saints who are dead, "is too lofty a question for me to answer positively. It is too obscure."

"I should like to ask the question of those who really know, for possibly there is some one who possesses this knowledge," curiously added the great thinker and loving theologian.

BOOK V

THE JEW AND THE TALMUD

INTRODUCTORY

AMONG all the various evidential arguments adduced in support of the truth of Christianity, many of them of a most weighty character and capable of an almost indefinite expansion, the history of the Jewish people, their wonderful past and their present condition, their numbers, their books, their ever-growing influence in the world of the twentieth century, must be considered as the most striking and remarkable.

The Christianity of the first century was surely no new religion; it was closely knit to, bound up with, the great Hebrew tradition. The sacred Hebrew tradition was the first chapter—the preface, so to speak—of the Christian revelation.

The early or pre-Christian details of the Jewish story are well known and generally accepted. The Old Testament account of the Jewish race historically is rarely disputed.

Less known and comparatively little regarded is the subsequent history of the Chosen People; over the records of their fate, after the final and complete separation of Judaism and Christianity, an almost impenetrable mist settled, and the story of the fortunes of the remnant of the Jews who survived the terrible exterminating wars of Titus and Hadrian has been generally neglected by the historians of the great Empire.

Very few have even cared to ask what happened to that poor remnant of vanquished Jews: all that is commonly known is that a certain number survived the great catastrophes, and that their scattered descendants, in different lands, appear and reappear all through the Middle Ages—a wandering and despised folk, generally hated and hating.

But these are still with us, and among us; that they occupy in our day and time a peculiar, a unique position of

power and influence which they have gradually acquired in all grades of modern society in many lands is now universally recognized.

This subsequent history of the fortunes of the Jewish people from the dates of their final separation from the Christian community, and the great catastrophes of the years of grace A.D. 70 and A.D. 135, constitutes a piece of supreme importance in the evidential history of the religion of Jesus; and yet, strange to say, it is, comparatively speaking, unknown and neglected.

It will be seen, as the pages of this wonderful story are turned over, how the guiding hand of the Lord, though in a different way, just as in the far-back days of the desert wanderings, has been ever visible in all the strange sad fortunes of the people, once the beloved of God.

The Jews of the twentieth century, numbering perhaps some ten or eleven millions, although scattered over many lands, constitute a distinct race, a separate people or nation. While during the Christian centuries *all* other races—peoples—nations—without a single exception have become extinct, or have become fused and merged with other and newer races and peoples, they, the Jews, have *alone* preserved their ancient nationality, their descent, their peculiar features, their individuality, their cherished traditions—*absolutely intact.*

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It does not seem ever to have been remarked that the rise and influence of the great Rabbinic schools of Palestine and Babylonia, at Tiberias and Jamnia, at Sura and Pumbeditha—schools devoted to the study of the Torah (the Law) and the other books of the Old Testament, were coincident with the rise and influence of the Gnostic schools, schools in which the Old Testament was generally reviled and discredited. Is it too much to assume that echoes from the great Rabbinic teaching centres reached and sensibly influenced the Christian masters in their life and death contest with Gnosticism, a contest in which the Old Testament, its divine origin and its authority, was ever one of the principal questions at stake?

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Nor is it an altogether baseless conception which sees that the reverence and love of at least a large proportion of earnest Christian folk for the Old Testament books, a reverence and a love that for more than eighteen hundred years has undergone no diminution or change, are in large measure due to the reverential handling, to the patient tireless studies of the great Rabbinical schools of the early Christian centuries—to the passionate, possibly exaggerated, love of the Jew for his precious book.

Though men guess it not, surely echoes from those strange Jewish schools of Tiberias and Sura, whose story we are about to relate, have reached the hearts of unnumbered Christians to whom the Jewish schools in question and their restless toil, all centring in the Holy Books in question, are but the shadow of a name ?

I

THE HISTORY OF THE THREE WARS WHICH CLOSED THE CAREER OF JUDAISM AS A NATION

IN the wonderful Jewish epic—so closely united to the Christian story—which stretches already over several thousand years, the history of the three last awful wars which led to their extinction as a nation, though not as a people, is merely a terrible episode in the many-coloured records of the wonderful race.

But these wars are specially important, for they were the earthly cause of the great change which passed over the fortunes of the Jews. Since the last of the three wars they have ceased to be a separate nation, and have become a wandering tribe scattered over the earth; but though wanderers, they are now more numerous, more influential in the world, than they had ever been even in the days of their greatest grandeur and magnificence.

The curious religious mania which seems to have possessed them, and which led them to revolt against the far-reaching power of the Roman Empire, is in some respects a mystery. We can only very briefly recount here the state of parties in Jerusalem, the centre of the nation, for a few years before the revolt which led to the first great war.

In the year B.C. 63 the Roman commander Pompey established the Roman rule over Judæa; from B.C. 6 the Jewish province, still preserving a partial independence, was governed by procurators sent from Rome, and by a native Herodian dynasty. The Palestinian Jews were roughly made up in this period of three parties:

(1) The *Sadducees and Herodians,* who occupied most of the high offices and the priesthood.

(2) The *Pharisees.* Strict Jews, loving with a devoted

love the Torah or Mosaic Law ; on the whole not favourable to the Roman and Herodian rule, but generally quiet and peace-loving. These included dreamers—men quietly longing for the promised Messiah, Essenes, and later, towards the end of the period we are speaking of, Christian Jews.

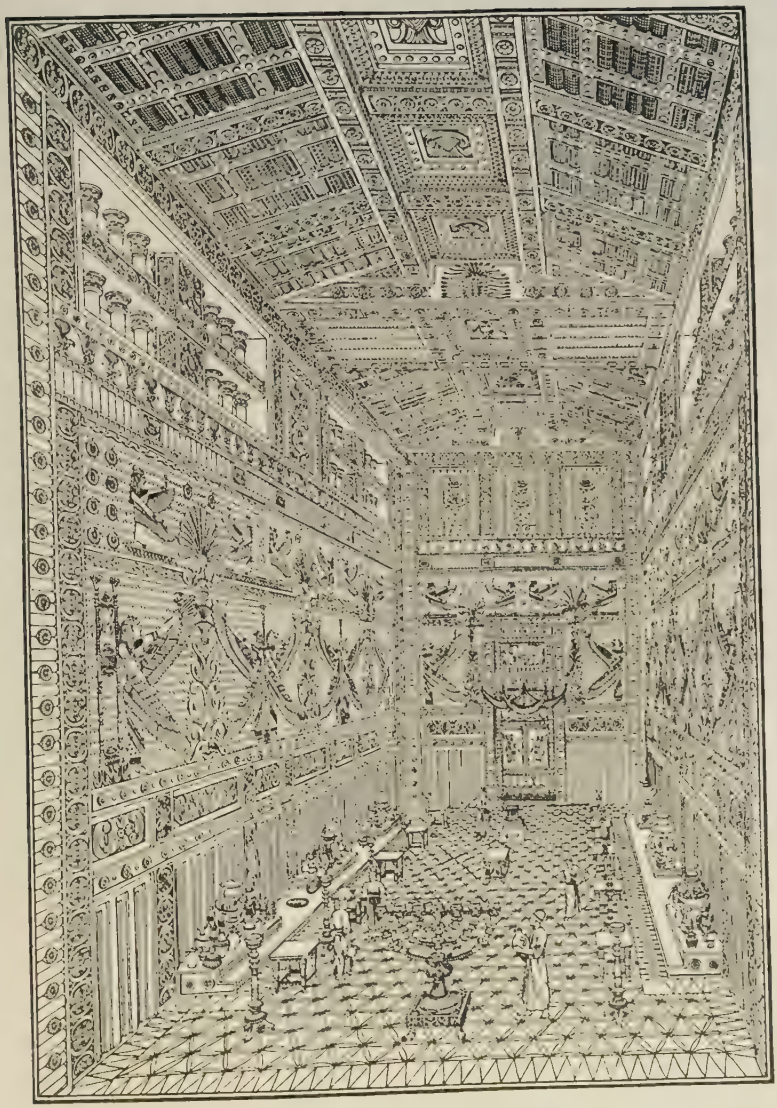
(3) *Zealots* — including adventurers, the Sicarii (or assassins), a wild turbulent clique (or sect), and a confused medley of disorderly folk, making up a formidable party of enthusiasts, expecting the early advent of a Messiah who should restore the past glories of the Jewish race ; these were usually fierce revolutionaries, intensely dissatisfied with the state of things then prevailing ; hating Rome and the Herodian dynasty favoured by Rome with a fierce hatred.

These Zealots had a very large, though disorderly, following among the people.

In A.D. 66 the revolt broke out in the Holy City. Florus, the Roman Procurator (or Governor), whose conduct during the early stages of the great revolt is inexplicable, left the city, leaving behind him only a small garrison ; the revolt spread not only in Palestine and in parts of the neighbouring province of Syria, but far beyond—notably in the great city of Alexandria, where a large Jewish colony dwelt. Scenes of terrible violence were common, and fearful massacres are recorded to have taken place in various centres of population where Jews were numerous ; the revolt became serious, and the Imperial Legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, took the field against the insurgents. He seems to have been a thoroughly incompetent commander, and failed completely in his efforts to regain possession of Jerusalem, the headquarters of the revolutionary party. Gallus retreated, suffering great loss. The failure of Gallus inflicted a heavy blow upon Roman prestige.

To put an end to the serious and widespread revolt, in the year of grace 67 Vespasian, one of the ablest and most distinguished of the Roman generals, was appointed to the supreme command in Syria.

Gradually, as the result of a terrible campaign, Vespasian restored quiet in Palestine and the neighbouring region, and



THE TEMPLE, JERUSALEM—THE HOLY PLACE BEFORE ITS DESTRUCTION BY TITUS, A.D. 70

laid siege to the Holy City, where the Zealots had established what can only be termed a reign of terror.

In the following year, A.D. 68, the violent death of the Emperor Nero, and the state of confusion that followed his death throughout the Empire, determined Vespasian to pause in his operations, and for a short period Jerusalem was left in the hands of the Zealots. The brief reigns of the Emperors Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were followed by the sudden election of Vespasian to the Empire in the year 69, the electors being for the most part his own devoted and disciplined legions in Syria.

Vespasian soon after his election returned to Rome, and the Empire, now under his strong rule, was once more united and quiet. He left behind him in Palestine as supreme commander his eldest son Titus, a general of great power and ability.

The siege of the revolted Jerusalem was once more pressed on; an iron circle now encircled the doomed city, which, in addition to its wonderful memories of an historic past, was one of the strong fortresses of the world.

The history of the siege and the eventual fall and ruin of the famous Jewish capital, with all its nameless horrors, has been often told and retold; but the sad episode of the burning of the Temple, with all its eventful consequences, must be briefly touched on.

Why was this world-famous sanctuary—then standing in all its marvellous beauty, with its matchless treasures, some of them environed with an aureole of sanctity simply unequalled in the story of the nations in the sphere of Roman influence—ruthlessly destroyed, and its wondrous treasures swept out? This was not the usual policy of far-seeing Rome.

According to Josephus, the burning of the Temple was the result of accident, and was not owing to any premeditated plan or order issuing from the Roman commander-in-chief.

Modern scholars,[1] however, believe that a passage from the lost *Histories of Tacitus* has been discovered which describes how a council of war was held by Titus after the capture of

[1] Mommsen, Renan, and Ramsay without hesitation ascribe the statement quoted here as taken by Sulpicius Severus (fourth century) from the lost portion of the *Histories of Tacitus*.

Jerusalem in which it was decided that the Temple ought to be destroyed, in order that the religion of the Jews and of the Christians might be more completely stamped out.

In the Talmud[1] the burning of the Temple is ascribed to the "impious Titus."

The cruelties which are associated with the storming of Jerusalem—the loss of life and the subsequent fate of the prisoners captured by the victorious army of Titus—make up a tale of horror which perhaps is unequalled in the world's history; there is, however, no doubt that the awful scenes of carnage and the fate of the defenders who survived the fall of the city were in large measure owing to the obstinate defence and irreconcilable hatred of the party of Jewish Zealots who provoked the war and for so long a time had been masters in the hapless city.

The result of the siege by Titus may be briefly summed up as follows. The Temple and the City of Jerusalem were absolutely razed to the ground, and may be said to have completely disappeared; only the mighty foundations of the magnificent Temple remained. These still are with us, and after nearly two thousand years bear their silent witness to the vastness and extent of the third Temple. It is no exaggeration which describes it as one of the most magnificent buildings of the Old World.

For some fifty-two years—that is, from A.D. 70 to A.D. 122—a vast heap of shapeless ruins was all that remained of the historic City of the Jews and its splendid Temple. In one corner of the ruins during this period of utter desolation the Tenth Legion (Fretensis) kept watch and ward over the pathetic scene of ruin.

In the year of grace 122, under the orders of the Emperor Hadrian, a new pagan city, known as Ælia Capitolina, slowly began to arise on the ancient site. This new city will be briefly described in due course.

The year following the awful catastrophe which befel the Jewish nation witnessed one of the most remarkable of the long series of "triumphs" which usually marked the close of the successful Roman wars.

[1] Talmud (Bab.), treatise "Gittin," 56A.

THE "WAILING PLACE" OF THE JEWS BEFORE THE RUINED WALLS OF THE TEMPLE

In A.D. 71, Titus, with his father Vespasian and brother Domitian, with extraordinary pomp and a carefully arranged pictorial display, entered Rome. This triumph was adorned with a long train of captive Jews, some of whom were publicly put to death as part of the great show. Among the more precious spoils of the fallen city were conspicuously displayed some of the celebrated objects rescued by the victors out of the burning Temple,—such as the famous seven-branched sacred candlestick; the golden table of shewbread; the purple veil which hung before the Holy of Holies; and the precious Temple copy of the Torah — the sacred Law of Moses.

The story of the great triumph is still with us, graved upon the marble of the slowly crumbling Arch of Titus,—the traveller may still gaze upon the figure of the great general, crowned by Victory, in his triumphal car driven by the goddess Rome, and upon the same imperial figure borne to heaven[1] by an eagle. Still the carved representation of the sacred candlestick of the seven branches, and the golden table, are beheld by the Christian with mute awe; by the Jew with a mourning that refuses to be comforted. But the sacred things[2] themselves over which brood such ineffable memories are gone.

The fall of Jerusalem, the utter destruction of the Holy City, the burning of the Temple, really sealed the fate of the Jews as a separate nation. The centre of the chosen race existed no longer. The sacred rites, the daily sacrifice, and the offering ceased for ever. The great change in Judaism we are going to dwell upon must be dated from the year 70. But more terrible events had yet to happen before the Jew acknowledged his utter defeat, and recognized that a great change had passed over him and had finally

[1] The arch was completed by Domitian after the death of Titus.

[2] The golden relics were deposited in the Temple of Peace, which Vespasian built opposite the Palatine; it was dedicated A.D. 75. The temple in question was destroyed completely by fire in the reign of Commodus. The temple copy of the Torah was taken to the imperial palace. The Emperor Severus, who built a synagogue for the Roman Jews, handed over this precious MS. to the Jewish community in Rome. The MS. has disappeared, but a list of some of the readings of this venerable codex has been preserved in the Massorah, and is still available for use.

altered the scene of his cherished hopes and glorious anticipations.

Two more bloody wars had to be fought out before the Jew settled down to his new life—the life to be lived by the Chosen People for a long series of centuries, the life he is living still, though more than 1800 years have come and gone since Titus brought the sacred Temple treasures from the ruined city to grace the proud Roman triumph.

Under Trajan in A.D. 116–7, and again under Hadrian in A.D. 133–4, the Zealot party of the defeated but still untamed people again rose up in arms against the mighty Empire in the heart of which they dwelt.

We will rapidly sketch these last disastrous revolts. The spirit of unrest and of hatred of the Roman power—the wild Messianic hopes which had inspired the party of Zealots in Jerusalem in the first war which had ended so disastrously —still lived in the great Jewish centres of population outside the Holy Land, in countries where the desolation which succeeded the events in 70 had not been acutely felt.

The Palestinian Jews for a time were apparently hopelessly crushed, but the Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria were still a powerful and dangerous group. It is impossible now to indicate the precise causes of the formidable rising of A.D. 116–7. The absence of Trajan and his great army in the more distant regions of Asia, and the news that the Roman arms had met with a serious check in that distant and dangerous campaign, seem to have given the signal for an almost simultaneous Jewish uprising in the Cyrene province, in the city of Alexandria, and in Cyprus.

We do not possess any very exact details here. The revolt was generally characterized by horrible cruelties on the part of the Jewish insurgents, and we read of fearful massacres perpetrated by the revolted Jews. The insurrection spread with alarming rapidity, and became a grave danger to the Empire. At first we only hear of several successes and victories. In the cities of Alexandria and Cyrene a reign of terror prevailed; but, as was ever the case when Rome in good earnest put forth her disciplined forces, the insurgents found themselves outnumbered and out-generalled. Two of the most distinguished

of the imperial commanders, Marcius Turbo and Lucius Quietus, conducted the military operations. The war—for the Jewish revolt of A.D. 116–7 assumed the proportions of a grave war—lasted well-nigh two years; but the insurgents were in the end completely routed.

The numbers of slain in this wild and undisciplined outburst of Jewish fury, according to the records of the historians of the war, are so great that we are tempted to suspect them exaggerated. In Cyrene and the neighbouring districts the number who perished is given as twenty-two thousand; the loss of life in Alexandria, Egypt, and Cyprus seems to have been equally terrible. But even granted that the numbers of Jews who perished in this fanatical rebellion have been, from one cause or other, exaggerated, it is certain that the numbers of the slain were enormous, that the power and influence of the Chosen People suffered a terrible check as the result of this rising, and that in the great cities of Cyrene and Alexandria the Jewish population of these centres—large and flourishing communities, possessing great wealth and influence, distinguished for their high culture and learning—were almost annihilated. The results of the insane revolts of A.D. 116–7 were indeed disastrous to the fortunes of this extraordinary and wonderful people.

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But the end was not yet. Another bloody war, with all its fearful consequences, had to be waged between the Jew and the Empire before the Chosen People finally resigned itself to the new life it was destined to live through the long centuries which followed. The old spirit of restlessness, of wild visionary hopes of some great one who should arise in their midst, still lived among the more ardent and fervid members of the now scattered and diminished people.

The exciting causes of the last great revolt have been variously stated. It is probable that the conduct of Hadrian in his latter years had become less tolerant, while a persecuting spirit more or less prevailed in his government. Among other irritating measures devised by Rome, the ancient rite of circumcision apparently was forbidden. But the immediate cause of the Jewish uprising no doubt was the steady progress

made in the building of the new city, Ælia Capitolina, on the site of Jerusalem and the Temple.

That a pagan city, with its theatres, its baths, its statues, should replace the old home of David and Solomon; that a Temple of Jupiter should be built on the site of the glorious House of the Eternal of Hosts; that the very stones of old Jerusalem and her adored sanctuary should be used for the construction of the new city of idols—was indeed especially hateful to the proud and fanatic Jew. Sacrilege could go no further. Rapidly the insurrection which began in Southern Judæa spread. Once more the Holy Land, especially in the southern districts, became the scene of a fierce religious war; Bethia, a fortress some fifteen miles from Jerusalem, became the central place of arms of the fierce insurgents, but the revolt spread far beyond the districts of Palestine.

In one striking particular this third Jewish war differed from the first and second revolts. In the earlier uprisings it was the *hope* of the appearance of a conquering Messiah which inspired the fanatical insurgents. In the third revolt a false Messiah actually presented himself, and gave a new colour and spirit to this dangerous insurrection.

The hero of the war—the pseudo-Messiah known as Bar-cochab (the son of a Star)—is a mysterious person; his name appears to have been a play upon his real appellation, and was assumed by him as representing the Star pictured in the famous prophecy of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17): "I shall see him," said the seer of Israel, "but not now. . . . There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Was this pseudo-Messiah simply an impostor, a charlatan, or did he really believe in his mission? The Talmud generally execrates his memory, but the principal doctor of that age, Rabbi Akiba, at a time when the Doctors of the Law had begun to exercise a paramount influence among the Jewish people, believed in him with an intense belief, and supported him in his Messianic pretensions.

Many, but by no means all, of the great Rabbis of the day seem to have supported this Bar-cochab, and the Talmud tells us that not a few of them endured martyrdom at the hands of the victorious Roman government. All contem-

porary history of this war is, however, confused,—the Talmud notices are especially so; the details are simply impossible to grasp.

Of the bravery of Bar-cochab there is no doubt; he perished before the end of the war, and some time after Rabbi Akiba, his most influential supporter, was put to an agonizing death by the victors.

Of Rabbi Akiba's sincerity there are abundant proofs. His memory was ever held in the highest honour by his countrymen. He was reputed to be the most learned and eloquent of that famous generation of Jewish teachers. The strange mistake he made in recognizing the false Messiah Bar-cochab is hard to account for.

As in the case of the two first famous Jewish wars, the Roman power seems at first to have underrated this rebellion, which, however, soon assumed a most formidable character. The general commanding in the Syrian provinces proving incapable, the ablest of the imperial generals, Sextus Julius Severus, was summoned from his command in distant Britain to Judæa. The Roman tactics employed were generally similar to those adopted by Trajan's generals in the second Jewish war of A.D. 116–7. Severus avoided any so-called pitched battle, but advanced gradually, attacking and besieging each of the rebel garrisons, thus gradually wearing out the impetuosity and ardour of the fanatical insurgents. The war lasted from two to three years. The devastation, the result of this war, was evidently very awful, and the numbers of the slain seem to have been enormous. We read of 50 armed places being stormed, 985 villages and towns being destroyed; 580,000 men were said to have been slain, besides many who perished through hunger and disease: the numbers of slain in another account are, however, only given as amounting to 180,000. One cannot help coming to the conclusion that all these numbers are considerably exaggerated. Judæa, however, there is no doubt, especially in the southern districts, became literally a desert; wolves and hyenas are stated to have roamed at pleasure over the ravaged country; the south of Palestine became a vast charnel-house, and the present barren appearance of the

country indicates that some terrible catastrophe has at some distant period passed over the land.[1]

The sternest measures effectually to stamp out all traces of revolt on the part of the Jewish nation were adopted by the Roman government after the close of the campaign. Numbers of the fugitives were ruthlessly put to death. Many were sold into slavery. No Jew was ever allowed to approach the ruins of the Holy City. Once in the year, on "the day of weeping," such of the hapless race who chose were suffered to come and mourn for a brief hour over the shapeless pile of stones which once had been a portion of their sacred Temple.

For a time a bitter persecution throughout the Empire punished this last formidable uprising; but these rigorous measures were very soon relaxed when all fear of another outbreak had passed away, and the Jews, or what remained of the people, were suffered to live as they pleased, to worship after their own fashion, and to pursue the study of their loved Law unmolested.

M. de Champagny (*Les Antonins*, livre iii. chap. iii.) estimates the number of Jews who perished in the three great wars of A.D. 70, of A.D. 116–7, and of A.D. 132–3–4 roughly as follows: Under *Titus*, about two millions; under *Trajan*, about two hundred thousand; under *Hadrian*, about one million.[2]

The third war was termed in the Babylonian Talmud "the War of Extermination."

II

(*a*) RABBINISM

We have described the three fatal wars at some length, because the wonderful history of the Jewish race entered upon

[1] The authorities for the details of this terrible and protracted war are Dion Cassius and the notices in the Talmud, especially in the treatise "Gittin."

[2] But these numbers, as we have stated, although derived from contemporary authorities, are evidently very much exaggerated.

an entirely new phase after the disastrous termination of the third of these terrible revolts. From the year of our Lord 134–5 they ceased to be a nation and became wanderers over the earth.

Yet in numbers and influence they can scarcely be said to have diminished. They amalgamated with no nation; they remained a marked and separate people, and so they continue to this day, though well-nigh eighteen long and troubled centuries have passed since the great ruin.

To what earthly cause is this marvellous preservation of the Jews to be attributed? Unhesitatingly we reply, Not to the rise of Rabbinism,—it had long existed among the Chosen People,—but to the development and consolidation of Rabbinism and to the famous outcome of Rabbinism, the Talmud.

The traditional history of Rabbinism and the beginning of the marvellous Rabbinic book, the Talmud, is given in the Mishnah treatise "Pirke Aboth" (Sayings of the Fathers). It is as follows:—

Moses received the written Law (the Torah) on Mount Sinai. He also received from the Eternal a further Law, illustrative of the written Law. This second Law was known as the "Law upon the lip." This was never committed to writing, but was handed down from generation to generation. Moses committed this oral Law to Joshua; Joshua committed it to the Elders; the Elders committed it to the Prophets; the Prophets handed on the sacred tradition of "the Words of the Eternal" to the Men of the Great Synagogue. These last are regarded as the fathers of "Rabbinism." Maimonides tells us that these fathers of "Rabbinism" succeeded each other (to the number of 120), commencing with the prophet Haggai, B.C. 520, who in the Talmud is described as the Expounder of the oral Law. The last member of the "Great Synagogue" was Simon the Just, *circa* B.C. 301.

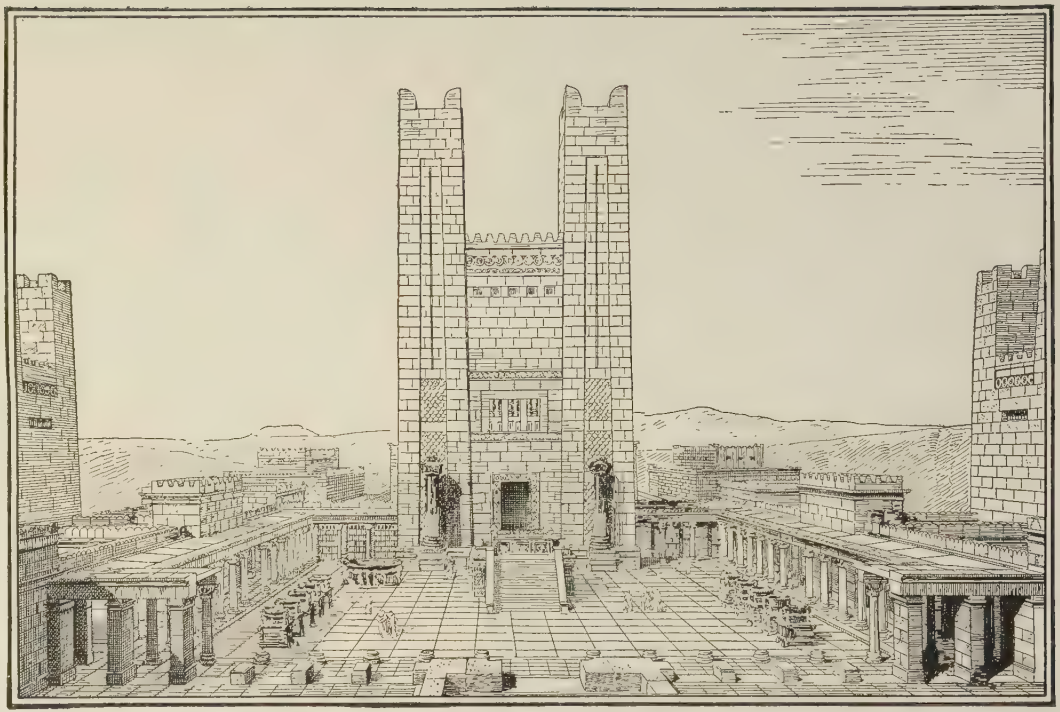
After Simon the Just a succession of eminent teachers known as the "Couples" handed down the sacred traditions of the "Law upon the lip" to the time of Hillel and Shammai, when we approach to the Christian era. Hillel, according to the Talmudic tradition, is said to have lived 100 years

before the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, and thus to have been a contemporary of Herod the Great.

Very little really is known of the "Men of the Great Synagogue," or of the ten "Couples" who succeeded them; little more than their names has been preserved. It is scarcely probable that in each generation only a pair of specially distinguished scholars should have lived. Most likely just ten names were known, and they were formed into five pairs or couples of contemporaries, after the fashion of the last and most famous pair, Hillel and Shammai. But from the times of Hillel and Shammai we have abundant historical testimony as to the existence and labours of the Rabbinic schools. Well-nigh all that we have related in the above passage is purely traditionary. There is no doubt a basis of truth in the account we have given, but the contemporary history is too scanty for us to describe this relation in the treatise "Pirke Aboth," which thus connects the Mishnah compilation in a direct chain with Moses, as anything more than a widely circulated legendary and traditional story.

We can, however, certainly assert that the foundations of the teaching of the school of Rabbinism which, after the great ruin of the year of Grace 70, began to exercise a paramount influence over the fortunes of the Jewish race, were laid at a very early period, several hundred years before the Christian era.

There is no doubt that Hillel and Shammai founded or, more accurately speaking, developed the existing Rabbinic schools and gathered into them large numbers of disciples. The great development of Rabbinism which is ascribed to the two famous teachers Hillel and Shammai was evidently owing to the complete absorption of Palestine by Rome, under the baleful influence of the royalty of Herod the Great; these causes were gradually undermining Judaism, not only in a political but also in its religious aspect. Hillel and Shammai were fervid and earnest Jews, and were determined to infuse a new religious spirit into the nation. Still, it is more than probable that all this early Rabbinism would scarcely have been more than a school of curious literary speculation, and



THE TEMPLE, JERUSALEM, BEFORE ITS DESTRUCTION BY TITUS, A.D. 70

FROM A DRAWING IN THE JEWISH ENCYCLOPÆDIA. (BY PERMISSION)

perhaps would not have seriously and permanently influenced the life of the Jewish people, had it not been for the awful events of the year A.D. 70. When Jerusalem ceased to exist, and the Temple was finally destroyed, then Christianity emerged from the heart of Judaism, and gathered into its fold many of the Chosen People.

What happened in the year A.D. 70 had a tremendous effect on the life of the Jews,—far more than the ordinary historian usually assigns to it. It has been tersely but truly said that, "unparalleled as were the calamities which attended the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, by far the most terrible of all was the total collapse of Judaism as a Creed, owing to the annihilation of all the divinely instituted means of access to God. The religious pulse of the nation ceased to beat, as it were, with a suddenness most appalling. We hear nothing of the Sadducees in those days, . . . they were swept away like chaff before the tempest never to appear any more; but the Pharisees, to whom the Rabbis and Scribes belonged, remained steadfast, and, collecting the poor remnant of the people around them, determined to infuse new life into them."

Mosaism was irretrievably destroyed in the year of our Lord 70, but the foundations of Rabbinism had, as we have noticed, been laid long before. It was only necessary to consolidate it, to give it shape and form, and to claim for the words of its expounders a yet higher authority than had as yet been conceded even to the written Law (the Torah). And this was done, or more accurately speaking was commenced, in the last twenty or thirty years of the first century (the years immediately following the catastrophe of A.D. 70) by the disciples of Rabban Jochanan ben Zacchai, who were certainly the earliest elaborators of the Mishnah,[1] the first and oldest part of the famous Talmud.

[1] What the Mishnah was will be explained below (p. 358), where a general description of the Talmud is given.

III

(*b*) RABBINISM

What Rabbinism and its Book, the Talmud, did for the Jewish People

Historical summary of events leading up to the compilation and consolidation of the first part of the Talmud—the Mishnah.

After A.D. 70, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, an extraordinary group of Rabbis or teachers of "the Law" arose—men of rare gifts, far-seeing and possessing unusual powers of communicating their enthusiasm to other men. These teachers recognized the utter hopelessness of any further war with Rome; they abandoned all expectation of seeing the Temple rebuilt; they saw that the future of Israel lay not in any restoration of its nationality as a people—that was now hopeless. But Israel alone among the people of the world possessed a Divine Law, was the inheritor of a glorious promise, a promise which they maintained belonged alone to them; no earthly misfortune could rob the Jew of this: they were the people specially beloved of God, and only by neglecting the observance of the Divine Law could they forfeit the sure and blessed inheritance reserved for them. That same Law must be their sole guide in all the various details of life—in the smallest matters as in the more important. In the rigid keeping of it they would in the end receive their great reward, the reward reserved for them, and for them alone, as the peculiar people of God the Supreme, the Almighty.

For some five centuries, since the days of Ezra and the return of the remnant of the people from the Captivity, "the Mosaic Law," as contained in the Pentateuch, essentially in the same form as we now have it, had been regarded by the Jew with an almost limitless reverence. The acknowledgment of its awful and binding precepts was the condition without which no one was a member of the Chosen People, or could have a share in the glorious promises reserved for them.

Their teachers insisted that the commands of "the Law" (the Torah) were in their entirety the commands of God. "He who says that Moses wrote even one verse of his own knowledge is a denier and despiser of the Word of God." The whole Pentateuch thus came to be regarded as dictated by God. Even the last eight verses of Deuteronomy, in which the death of Moses is told, were asserted to have been written by means of a divine revelation. Some of the teachers even went further; they asserted that the complete book of the Law had been handed to Moses by God.[1]

As time went on, the other Books of the "Old Testament" —at first the writings of the older prophets and works on the pre-exilic period of Israel; then the body of the "prophets" and the other Old Testament writings, became also regarded as documents in which the will of God was revealed in a manner absolutely binding.

Round the Law (Torah) had gathered a vast number of explanatory directions, and a certain number of traditional additions known as "Haggadah." The first of these, the directions or explanations, were known by the term "Halachah."[2] It had become necessary, seeing that the Law of Moses was accepted as the divine code for the guidance of the Chosen People, to explain and enlarge it further, so as to apply its brief enactments to all the conditions of everyday life. Some few of these Halachah were traditionally derived from Moses himself. Others had probably been composed very early in the schools of the prophets; yet more were the work of the Scribes,[3] a numerous class of teachers which had arisen after the return from exile in the days of Ezra. These Halachah (we use the well-known expression in preference to the more accurate plural form Halachoth; the same course has been followed in that of

[1] These singular assertions will be found in the Mishnah, in the Talmudic treatises of the Sanhedrim and the Baba-Bathra.

[2] Halachah signifies literally custom, practice, rule. The term is further explained and illustrated in the following chapter on the "Contents of the Talmud." Haggadah, which generally signifies Tradition, is also explained and illustrated (see Appendix).

[3] These Scribes, their position and means of livelihood, are discussed more fully below on p. 350.

the expression "Haggadah") had been largely augmented in the half-century preceding the catastrophe of A.D. 70.

The group of eminent Rabbis who arose after the fall of the City and Temple, and who set themselves the task of reconstituting Israel on a new and purely religious basis, took these Halachah, studied them, meditated on them,—no doubt recast many of them to suit the new position of the people, now that the Temple and its complicated ritual of sacrifice and public prayer had disappeared, and framed them into an elaborate system of regulations, thus pointing out how the Law might be rigidly observed in all the relations of ordinary life.

This great and elaborate work is termed the Mishnah [1]—or "Repetition,"—the term originally derived from the method in which it was elaborated. It was not written down in the first instance, but was *repeated* again and again by the more famous teachers and heads of schools to their pupils. The term "Mishnah" came in time to signify "the second Law," but that was not the original meaning; it belonged to a period when the whole instruction was *oral.*

The period of the elaboration of these Halachah (rules) and Haggadah (tradition) lasted somewhere about a hundred years or a little more. The great teachers who busied themselves in this work are ordinarily termed the Mishnic Rabbis —the Talmud term for them being Tannaim.

In the last years of the second century the Mishnah or first part of the Talmud was virtually closed, and the great Rabbinic schools then busied themselves in further commenting upon and explaining the Halachah (rules) and Haggadah (traditions) of the Mishnah; these further comments and explanations are known as the Gemara.

This second part of the Talmud, known as "Gemara," [1] the complement of the first or Mishnic portion, was the outcome of the labours of several hundred Doctors or Rabbis. Two famous schools of Rabbinical study carried on the great work of commenting on the Mishnah. The one, the Palestinian, had its headquarters in Tiberias. The chief centres of the other, the Babylonian, were Sura and Pumbeditha. In both these compilations the same Mishnah

[1] The Mishnah and the Gemara are explained in detail below on p. 358.

is the text on which the vast body of commentary is based. But the Gemara, or commentary, is in many cases different. The Palestinian Talmud in the form which now exists is much shorter than the Eastern or Babylonian work. The Palestinian Rabbis worked from about the year of our Lord 190; their work was closed in the middle of the fifth century. The labours of the Babylonian doctors may be dated from the last years of the second, and were closed in the middle or later years of the sixth century.

The Babylonian—the larger Talmud, containing the Mishnah and Gemara, which has come down to us fairly intact, fills some twelve large folio volumes, and covers no less than 2947 folio leaves in double columns; or in other words, 5894 pages written in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Rabbinic. The nature of these vast compilations is described more in detail in a later section of this Fifth Book.

The Talmudic term for the doctors of the Gemara is Amoraim.

. . . . . .

The one purpose and object of the Talmud, followed out with a changeless and restless industry by the doctors of the Mishnah and the Gemara, from the year 70 to nearly the close of the sixth century—that is to say, for a period of some five hundred years—was the *Glorification of Israel.* Law and legend, rule and tradition, massed together with rare skill, all dwell on this. The Jews, and only the Jews, were the people chosen by God. If they would but honour Him and serve Him faithfully they would in the end win the exceeding great and promised reward. The way, and the only way, to know Him and to serve Him was pointed out with unerring lucidity and a marvellous wealth of detail in the mighty compilation of the Talmud. They were strictly warned against encouraging proselytes. The ineffable blessings belonged to the Jew and to the Jew alone. Again, the exceeding great reward belonged not to the successful Jewish soldier, but to the Jew who kept the stern Law handed down from Moses to prophet, and by prophet to scribe, and by scribe to the Rabbis who compiled the Mishnah and Gemara, which together make up the Talmud. The question of revolt against Rome found no place in the Talmud teaching.

After the three great wars—especially after the first, which closed with the destruction of the Temple—the Jew had no nationality, no country. He needed none. He had something far greater. He, and only he, was possessor of the blessed Divine Law; the solitary heir of its glorious promises.

The Talmud became the bond which linked together in one solid group the Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria, of Rome and Babylonia. Its power over the Jewish mind became boundless. It possessed indeed a wondrous fascination for every child of Israel. It impressed upon each member of the scattered race, in a way no teaching had ever previously done, the consciousness who he was, and what was the awful nature of his inheritance. Strong in this consciousness, he endured all the wrongs and persecutions, the cruel acts and yet more cruel words which have been, with rare interludes, his lot since A.D. 70. All through the subsequent ages he endured a bitter persecution, which even in our own day and time is still in many lands constantly ready to break out against him.

Strong in this consciousness he lives on, a willing wanderer and a stranger among the various nations of the earth, hated and hating,—feared but at the same time honoured; ever increasing in numbers, in wealth, and influence. His hand is in each group of statesmen, now publicly, more often hidden, but always there: he is yet greater in the exchanges and marts of the nations; the finance of every civilized country is more or less guided by him, more or less subject to his dictation and supervision.

Who now, men ask, is this ever-present changeless Jew? What is the secret of his power and ever-growing influence? The second great awakening—the awakening to the grandeur of his true position in the world's story—when all seemed lost, when his Temple and City were destroyed, when he became at once homeless, landless, an outcast hated, even despised, as far as we can *see*, was the work of the Doctors and Rabbis of Tiberias in Galilee, and of Sura and other centres in Babylonia, in the years which followed the crushing ruin of A.D. 70. It was the work of the compilers and teachers of the Mishnah and Gemara which together made up the Talmud. We may now and again wonder at the curious and startling assertions of the Mishnah, and even smile at some of the

marvellous extravagances of the Gemara ; but when we ponder over the wonderful story of the Jew during the eighteen centuries which have passed since the desolation of A.D. 70, we dare not mock at the Talmud.

When we consider the whole question of what we have termed " the great awakening " of the Jewish people after the sudden and tremendous ruin of the City and Temple ; the complete change in the heart of the Jew ; the abandonment of the old dream of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel ; the adoption of a spiritual kingdom in its place : when we remember the universal reverence for, the implicit obedience which very soon began to be paid to, the teaching of the Mishnah and Gemara—the Talmud—a reverence and an obedience which completely changed the life, the views, the hopes of the scattered race in all lands,—we ask the pressing question : *Whence* came all this—the mighty change, the enthusiasm which has never paled or waned ? The Mishnic Rabbis—the Gemara teachers, numerous, able, and devoted though they were, some few of them men of lofty genius and profound scholarship, do not account for this amazing result.

The " Talmud," the outcome of these famous Rabbinic schools of the early Christian centuries, with its wild extravagances, its many beautiful thoughts, its peculiar and rigid system, touched the heart of the Jew, and bound together this people condemned to wander through the ages without a home, a country, a nationality, with a link no time, no human hate or scorn has been able to break or even to loose.

The strange weird Book was God's mysterious instrument by which He has chosen to preserve intact the people He once loved—loves still—until the day, perhaps still far distant, dawns when the Jew, with eyes opened at last, shall look on Him whom they pierced.

IV

THE TALMUD

One [1] who loved with a love passionate, though not always discriminating, this vast wondrous compilation which has so

[1] Dr. Emanuel Deutsch.

marvellously affected the fortunes of the Chosen People, has written the following words: "The origin of the Talmud is coeval with the return from the Babylonish Captivity (some five centuries before Christ). One of the most mysterious and momentous periods in the history of humanity is that brief span of the Exile. What were the influences brought to bear upon the captives during that time we know not. But this we know, that from a reckless, lawless, godless populace they returned transformed into a band of Puritans. . . . The change is there, palpable, unmistakable—a change we may regard as almost miraculous. Scarcely aware before of the existence of their glorious national literature, the people now began to press round these brands plucked from the fire, the scanty records of their faith and history, with a fierce and passionate love, a love stronger than that of wife and child. These same documents, as they were gradually formed into a canon, became the immutable centre of their lives, their actions, their thoughts, their very dreams. From that time forth, with scarcely any intermission, the keenest as well as the most practical minds of the nation remained fixed upon them. *Turn it, and turn it again,* says the Talmud with regard to the Bible, *for everything is in it.*"

After the fall of the City and the burning of the Temple in A.D. 70 the wonderful records of the Jew and his Book (the Talmud) are all clear and definite. How it was composed, who compiled it, and why it was put out, all this belongs to history, and forms a most important though little known chapter in the annals of the Chosen People; in some respects also it is a most weighty piece of evidential history—perhaps the most weighty—possessed by Christianity.

But some of the materials out of which the great Book (the Talmud), which has so enormously influenced the fortunes of the Chosen People for so many centuries, was composed, existed before the catastrophe of A.D. 70. We will briefly examine what we know of the ancient materials of the Talmud; the examination will be of the highest interest.

It is certain that very early—no doubt in the far-back days of Moses—there must have existed, as we have already suggested, a number of explanatory laws which set forth in detail many

of the laws and regulations broadly laid down in the original written code of the great lawgiver. Questions must have been asked again and again—To what cases in actual life the brief written precept applied, what consequences it in general entailed, and what was to be done that the commandments might be fairly, even rigidly observed. In a number of cases the original written Law gave no direct answer.

To supply this need a body of Halachah (the word Halachah, as we have stated, signifies rule, practice, custom) gathered round the written Law (the Torah). Some of these Halachah, tradition said, were given by Moses himself; others were said to have been devised by that primitive council of the desert wanderings, the elders, and by their successors, the later "judges within the gates," referred to in the Pentateuch. As time went on the Halachah or authoritative oral Law of explanation no doubt formed an important branch of the studies pursued in those schools of the prophets founded by Samuel in the early days of the monarchy—schools of which we know so little, but which throughout the pre-exilic days evidently played a part in the life of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

On the return from the Captivity, some five centuries before the Christian era, the remnant of the nation who returned to their desolated land came back a changed people—"a band of Puritans" we have, with scarcely any exaggeration, termed them; while the Divine Law which once many, perhaps the majority, of the people neglected, the very existence of which they had ignored, almost forgotten, became the object of their passionate love.

During the period of exile, of which we know so little but in the course of which the great change to which we have been dimly alluding passed over the people, the memory of the oral Law, much of the ancient Halachah, the traditions, the sacred expositions which make up the Haggadah, were kept alive by teachers, in the first instance by the men who had been trained in the schools of the prophets. Then after the return from exile the study of all these treasured memories—some, as we have already suggested, possibly dating from the days of Moses—which surrounded the now precious Law, received a new development. The Law, the Halachah, the traditions generally known as

Haggadah, were no longer the mere heritage of the scholars who composed the somewhat mysterious schools of the prophets we read of in the days of the kings, but were now regarded as the precious treasure of the whole nation.

As the Divine Law rose in public estimation its scientific study and exposition became a great and popular craft. Every individual of the nation was interested in knowing it and obeying it. A numerous and independent class or guild arose which made its investigation and study the chief business of life. These men were known as the Scribes; they became the recognised teachers of the nation. Some of them were men of independent means, but the majority practised some trade or business out of which they lived. They were tent-makers, sandal-makers, weavers, carpenters, tanners, bakers, etc., but the study of the Law was their loved occupation, and some of them attained great proficiency in their work. Such a class of men had never existed in any people before—has never made its appearance since in any nation.[1]

This study of the Law became a veritable science, a science that gradually assumed the very widest dimensions. The name given to it is "Midrash"—interpretation, and it included study, meditation, exposition, investigation, inquiry. The men of the "Return from Exile" who devoted themselves to this work took as the foundation of their labours, first the written Law of Moses, then gradually the records of the Prophets and the other writings subsequently included in the Old Testament canon; and to this material was added the oral Law, or such portion of it which had been preserved, including the sacred traditions which had been handed down from the days of Moses and his successors, and treasured up in the schools of the prophets. In this "Midrash"—for we will keep to the well-known term which generally included all this varied and comprehensive study of the Scribes who lived in the period between the Return from the Exile and the Christian era — two distinct currents can be distinguished. The first of these great currents may be termed Prose, the second Poetry. The first (the prose) is called Halachah

[1] The period here referred to extended from the return from the Captivity —the days of Ezra—roughly until the Christian era.

(rules, customs); the second (the poetry), Haggadah (tradition and legend, including parable, allegory, lessons).[1]

The Halachah (rules) for a very long period were never written down, but were transmitted from teacher to teacher in an unbroken succession, orally, with many and various additions. The Haggadah (traditions) in many cases were, however, written down, and so transmitted.

Thus from the period of the Return from the Exile a vast bulk of teaching, largely unwritten, traditional, and legendary, all founded on and closely bearing on the Law (Torah), had been collected by the Scribes and their schools stretching over a period of about five centuries. Some thirty years before the Christian era Hillel, the great Rabbinic master of the period, endeavoured to reduce this great mass of teaching, oral and written, rule and tradition, Halachah and Haggadah, to some definite system and order. He did something in this direction, but died before his task was in any real way completed, and for many years nothing further was done in the way of codifying or arrangement.

Then came the great upheaval of A.D. 70, when the Holy City was razed to the ground; when it appeared as though the religion of the Jew was destroyed, now that the Temple round which all the cherished memories of the people were grouped had disappeared. Curiously enough, as it appears to men, the contrary was the case: a wonderful resurrection of religious life was the almost immediate outcome of the fall of the City and Temple.

A group of singularly able and devoted men, as we have already remarked, arose at this critical moment in Jewish history—when all seemed lost. Judaism in the year 70, when the long and bitter war with Rome was finally closed, was stripped of everything. It had lost for ever its position as a nation. Its Temple, the joy of the whole world, as their royal songman pictured it, was a heap of shapeless ruins. Its most sacred treasures were carried away to adorn an Italian triumph. The Holy City was literally razed to the ground. The pro-

[1] At the close of this Fifth Book is a short general description of "Haggadah." See, too, in the Appendix for a further description of Haggadah and Halachah.

mised land of their fathers was desolated. Thousands of the people were slain or reduced to slavery. Of the Jews who dwelt as strangers in Egypt, Syria, and Italy—the very name was hated and despised. Only one thing remained to the sad remnant of the Chosen People: the sacred Law of Moses, the Torah—the writings of their old prophets—their treasured Psalms—the undying records of their past glorious history.

And these precious writings, and the wonderful body of rule and tradition, oral and written, which had gathered round them, the Halachah and Haggadah of the Scribes collected during the previous four or five centuries,—these were saved from the awful wreck, and a group of devoted Jews gathered them together, and with them at once proceeded to train up a new and a yet greater and more influential people than had ever before worshipped the Eternal of Hosts, even in the golden days of their mighty kings David and Solomon; but the foundation-stories of the grandeur of the new Israel were not to be built with human materials. No army, no strong fortress, no stately city, not even a visible temple made with hands after the fashion of the glorious lost House of God, were for the future to rank among the proud and cherished possessions of the Jew. Only the Divine Law given him direct from God the One Supreme, the Everlasting, for the future was to represent to the Jew home and hearth, family and nation, City and Temple.

If the Jews—the scattered harassed remnant who survived the bloody Roman war of Titus—would with heart and soul keep the precepts of the Divine Law, what mattered insult and cruelty, human scorn and malice, suffering and misery for a little season; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the beatitude which awaited the Jew who loved the Torah. This was the teaching of that group of fervid and devoted men who, so to speak, arose out of the ashes of the ruins of Jerusalem and the Temple. And the sad remnant of the people hearkened to this teaching, and with heart and soul revered the Law, the Torah of their God.

All this is no mere rhetoric, strange though it reads: it is plain unvarnished history.

Undismayed by the crushing ruin of A.D. 70, the

chief Rabbinic leaders, when Jerusalem was destroyed, re-established their schools at Jamnia (Jabne), a town close to the sea, south of Joppa. They had little sympathy with the extreme party of Nationalists, the Zealots; for they saw that any serious conflict with Rome was utterly hopeless, so they diverted the thoughts and aspirations of the survivors of the great revolt into other channels. The cult of the Law henceforward must be the work of Israel. They were wonderfully successful, and soon infused into the heart of the Chosen People something of their burning zeal; for what they taught, they maintained, were the very words and commands of the Eternal of Hosts.

A great master, Jochanan ben Zacchai, soon made the new school of Jamnia a notable centre of the new work. We use the term "new"; for although Rabbinism and the scientific study of the Law had existed long before the events of A.D. 70, it received a fresh and striking impulse when the Temple and City existed no longer.

Round the chair of Jochanan gathered quickly a band of faithful disciples who shared in the quiet enthusiasm of the great master, and in the last twenty-five or thirty years of the fatal century which had witnessed the terrible victory of Titus, the real foundations of the Talmud, which united and bound together the Chosen People for centuries, which preserved them from disintegration and welded them once more into one great race, were laid.

Rome allowed this new spirit to grow up among the remnant of the people she had crushed, and made no effort to interfere with the Jamnia Rabbinic school. The statesmen of the Empire were quite content that the restless people, so long a danger to the State, should turn its attention to other matters unconnected with aspirations after independence. It was no doubt with some contempt that they witnessed the growth of the new spirit among the turbulent nation. It was nothing to Rome—this singular devotion to an old Law and a traditional revelation which the Jew considered divine. They little thought that the Jew and his ancient Law would outlive the mighty Empire of which they were so proud, and that the despised and crushed race and its cherished

belief would influence in a marvellous way the civilized world for hundreds of years after Rome had become the mere shadow of a name.

The great Jewish revolt of A.D. 117 had little influence upon the fortunes and wonderful growth of the Rabbinic schools, the chief seat of which was in Palestine. The scenes of that rebellion and its ghastly punishment were far removed from Palestine, and what happened in Cyrene, Egypt, and Cyprus only slightly affected the dwellers in the old Land of Promise.

But the next revolt—the rebellion we have termed the third great Jewish war—had a different scene. Once more Palestine witnessed a dangerous and bloody war, when Bar-cochab, a mistaken enthusiast and patriot, raised again the standard of rebellion against Rome, and, asserting that he was the long-looked-for Messiah, gave this last formidable Jewish rising the character of a religious war.

As a rule the great masters of the new Rabbinic schools were out of sympathy with the Zealots who had risen against Rome in this last disastrous revolt; but one of their number, the famous Rabbi Akiba, curiously enough, had espoused their cause, and certain others of the more eminent Rabbinic teachers, no doubt owing to his influence, had rallied to the cause of Bar-cochab in the desperate and hopeless struggle.

Rabbi Akiba occupies among the early group of founders of the Talmud, who flourished from *circa* A.D. 70 to *circa* A.D. 190, perhaps the most prominent position. He was even termed the "second Moses," so sought after were his teachings and expositions of the sacred Law, and its subsequent explanations and additions—the Halachah. He gathered round him not only a host of younger pupils, but among his disciples were numbered a group of Rabbis who became subsequently the chief teachers of their day and time. It has been often asked what induced this great Rabbinic scholar and teacher to throw in his lot with a wild enthusiast like Bar-cochab, and to support that impostor's baseless claim to be recognized as the promised Messiah.

The answer perhaps is that Akiba, in common with others

of the new school of Rabbinism, which aimed at restoring the fallen Judaism by means of an enthusiastic devotion to the Divine Law, recognised that in Christianity must be sought and found the most dangerous foe to the Rabbinic conception of the Chosen People. After the fall of the City and Temple, and the breaking up of every national and religious bond, there was grave danger that the Jewish people would become absorbed among the Gentile Christians. It is probable that already some of the Rabbis were secretly persuaded of the truth of the Gospel story. Rabbi Akiba was, however, one of the most energetic opponents of Christianity, and he welcomed the appearance of the pseudo-Messiah Bar-cochab as a rival to Jesus of Nazareth.

But great though the influence of Akiba was, for he persuaded some Jews, he evidently did not carry the bulk of the Rabbinic teachers with him, for the Talmud execrates the name of Bar-cochab, though it ever mentions the name of Akiba with the deepest and tenderest veneration. The great learning and the devoted behaviour of the loved teacher under the most excruciating tortures which accompanied his execution by the Roman government, saved his memory from the bitter reproaches with which the Talmud speaks of Bar-cochab and the authors of the last ill-fated and useless revolt.[1]

Akiba is ever remembered as one of the greatest of this wonderful group of Talmud founders, as well as a very noble martyr.

Rabbi Akiba's work was not limited to exposition and explanation and elaborate discussions in the academies of the traditional Halachah or oral comments on the Law of Moses.

[1] Of Akiba, the Mishnah tells us, as he was in his last agonies, while his flesh was being torn with combs of iron, he kept repeating the words of the "Shema" invocation, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One." He lingered over the word *One*, and expired as he uttered the word "One." The ministering angels then said before the Holy One, "Such is Torah (the Law), and such is its reward." Bath Qol (the heavenly voice) went forth and said, "Happy art thou, Rabbi Akiba, that thou art invited to the life of the world to come. . . ."

Such was the end of Akiba, the most exalted, most romantic, and most heroic character perhaps in that vast gallery of the learned of his time. The most remarkable period of his career may be dated about A.D. 110–35.

He was virtually the first [1] who attempted to codify and arrange the vast accumulation of these Halachah and Haggadah, and to reduce them into something like order and arrangement. Some years after Akiba's death, about the middle of the second century, his most famous disciple, the Rabbi Meir, who is known in the Talmud as the "Light of the Law," took up his master Akiba's work, and went on with arranging and codifying the Halachah, introducing, however, many more Halachah into his codification, and supplementing and illustrating his expositions with many interesting traditions (Haggadah) [2]; thus preparing the way for the more elaborate collection or recension of Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi—the Holy—who is known in the Talmud as "Rabbi" —*the* Rabbi *par excellence*. "Rabbi's" great work of codification may be dated about the years A.D. 200–19, or thereabouts.

The work of "Rabbi," somewhat enlarged and recast, is with us still. It represents fairly the Mishnah which was used as the text of the great Gemara [3] commentaries compiled in the schools of Palestine and Babylonia [4] between the end of the second century and the last years of the sixth century. The Mishnah of "Rabbi," which was largely based upon the collections of Rabbi Akiba and his disciple Rabbi Meir, and the Gemaras of Palestine and Babylonia,[4] compiled in centuries three, four, five, and six, make up the Talmud.

There was a strict traditional interdiction which dated back at least to the centuries which followed the Return from the Exile, if not earlier, against ever committing the Halachah and the discussions of the Scribes upon the Halachah to *writing*. The latest Jewish scholars have decided that to a certain extent the interdiction was removed by "Rabbi" in

[1] The preliminary work of Hillel in this direction of arranging and codifying seems not to have been carried on.

[2] "Haggadah," as the better-known word, is substituted for the more accurate plural form "Haggadoth."

[3] For a full definition of these two famous terms *Mishnah* and *Gemara*, see below, p. 358, where the terms in question are explained at some length.

[4] The Palestinian Gemara was closed nearly a century and a half before the Babylonian Gemara was completed.

the very early years of the third century, or at the close of the second century.

We may assume, then, with tolerable certainty that "Rabbi" in his old age reduced the great collection of Halachah to writing, transgressing, in a way, the ancient tradition which forbade this. He seems to have considered that the prohibition, if maintained in its ancient strictness, might endanger the preservation of the precious teaching.

"Rabbi" did not entirely abrogate the interdiction, for the oral method of instruction continued during the period of the Gemara discussions in Palestine and in Babylonia: the teacher alone using the *written* Halachah, which made up the redaction of the Mishnah by "Rabbi" as a guide; the pupils, however, always repeating the lesson *orally*.

Before the fall of Jerusalem the great Sanhedrim was the ultimate resort for decisions in the Law, though it is true that as a rule it accepted the Law as developed by the great teachers; but still, "from thence," *i.e.* from the Sanhedrim, as the Mishnah says, "proceeded the Law for all Israel." But after A.D. 70 the great Sanhedrim ceased to exist. This of course gave a very marked increase in prestige and power to the acknowledged leading Rabbis or Masters in the Rabbinic schools.

The principal task of these doctors was to teacn the Law. The ideal was that every Israelite should have a knowledge of this Divine Law. Of course, this ideal was unattainable, but the famous Rabbis without doubt gathered round them great numbers who longed for special instruction in what had come to be looked on as the glory and hope of their race. "Bring up many scholars" was a famous ancient saying.

The instruction in the Palestinian schools of Jamnia and Lydda, and a little later more especially at Tiberias, and also in the famous Babylonian schools such as Sura,[1] Nehardea, and Pumbeditha, consisted in a continual exercise of the memory. The oral Law before the days of "Rabbi," at the close of the second century, was never committed to writing, the teacher repeating his matter again and again.

[1] The Rabbinic school of Sura was founded by Rab, one of the most important pupils of R. Judah Ha-Nasi (Rabbi).

This invariable method of teaching in the Rabbinical schools was the origin of the term *Mishnah* (repetition).[1]

The system of teaching was absolutely different from that of our modern colleges and universities. The masters of the various schools did not confine themselves to giving lectures which the pupils could take down. Here all was busy life, excitement, debate ; question was met by question, and countless questions and answers were given, wrapped up in allegory, parable, and legend,—of course under the guidance and direction of the head of the academy.

[1] *Mishnah.*—A noun formed from the verb "shanah," to repeat. In post-Biblical Hebrew the verb "shanah" acquired the special meaning of "to teach" and "to learn" that which was not transmitted in writing, but only *orally*. Evidently the idea of *frequent recitation* underlies the word.

Mishnah signifies "Instruction"—the teaching and learning the tradition. It is the Law which is transmitted *orally*, in contrast to the term Mikra, which signifies the Law which is written and read.

The Halachah, finally redacted by Judah Ha-Nasi the Holy (Rabbi), *circa* A.D. 200–19, were designated the Mishnah, and were adopted by the Rabbis of the Gemara as the text upon which they worked. This Mishnah of R. Judah the Holy was adopted simultaneously by the Rabbis and Doctors of the Law in the academies of Palestine and Babylonia.

Although the Mishnah may be said to consist chiefly of Halachah, it contains several entire treatises of an Haggadic nature—*e.g.* "Aboth," "Middoth," etc.—and numerous Haggadic pieces are scattered here and there among the Halachah. In both the Talmudim (the Palestinian and Babylonian) there are thousands of Haggadic notices interspersed among the Halachah.

The Rabbis of the Mishnah were termed Tannaim ; the earlier Rabbis of the Gemara were termed Amoraim.

The Rabbinical headquarters of Palestine and Babylonia alike regarded the study of the Mishnah as their chief task. In Palestine the principal academies were Jamnia (Jabne), Lydda, and subsequently Tiberias. In Babylonia the principal seats of the academies were Sepphoris, Nehardea, Pumbeditha, and especially Sura.

Gemara.—The word signifies "that which has been learned," the learning transmitted to scholars by tradition ; and in a more restricted sense it came to denote "the traditional exposition of the Mishnah."

Talmud primarily means "teaching," though it denotes also "learning" ; practically it is a mere amplification of the Mishnah, the Talmud being made up of the Mishnah and Gemara.

Like the Mishnah, the Talmud was not the work of one author, or of several authors, but was the result of the collective labours of many successive generations, whose task finally resulted in the great and complex book known as the Talmud.

The Palestinian Talmud received its present form in the academy of Tiberias ; the Babylonian Talmud, largely in the academy of Sura.

A most interesting picture of the inner life and organization of the Rabbinical schools or academies in which the Talmud was slowly and deliberately composed is given in the vast and scholarly Jewish Encyclopædia (completed in the year 1906). A very brief précis of this is attempted here. The date of the picture in question is as late as the tenth century, and refers especially to a comparatively late period in the Rabbinical work ; but much of it goes back to the time of the Amoraim, the earliest Rabbis of the Gemara, who were the teachers from the first part of the third century.

It may be taken as an account and general description of the method in which the two versions of the Talmud were composed, in Palestine as well as in Babylonia, in such academical centres of Rabbinism as Sura and Tiberias. The picture especially refers to the Babylonian academies of Pumbeditha and Sura, but without doubt a very similar procedure was followed in the Palestinian academy of Tiberias.

The students or disciples appear to have assembled twice every year, the discussion and instruction lasting four weeks.

In the month Elah at the close of the summer, and in the month Adar at the end of the winter, the disciples desiring instruction in the sacred Law journeyed to the academy, say of Sura, or of Pumbeditha, from their various abodes, having carefully studied and prepared during the previous five months the special treatise of the Mishnah announced at the academy at the close of the preceding session by the head of the Rabbinic school as the subject for discussion at the next session.

They at once presented themselves on arriving at Sura to the head of the academy, who proceeded to examine them on the treatise of the Mishnah fixed beforehand.

They sat in the following order or rank : seventy of the senior or principal pupils were placed nearest to the head, or president, of the school, the number seventy being a reminiscence of the great Sanhedrim.

Behind these seventy sat the other disciples and members of the academy.

The foremost row—the seventy—recited aloud the subject-matter of the discussion and of instruction which were to

follow ; they recited, too, any passage which seemed to require especial consideration, which they debated among themselves, the " head," or president, all the while silently taking notes of the debate.

The " head " after this lectured generally on the treatise, the subject of the discussion, adding an exposition of those special passages which had given rise to the debate.

Sometimes in the course of his lecture the " head " asked a question as to how the disciples would explain a certain Halachah. The question had to be answered by the scholars he chose to name. After the answer or answers had been received the " head " added his own exposition of the Halachah in question.

Subsequently one of the " seventy " senior students gave an address, summing up the arguments which had arisen out of the theme—the Halachah—which they had been considering.

In the fourth week of the session the " seventy " and other of the students were examined individually by the " head " of the academy.

Questions received from various quarters were also discussed for final solution. The " head " listened, and finally formulated his decisions, which were written down. The results of the meeting of the academy during the month of session were finally signed by the " head " of the academy.

. . . . . .

The details and comments contained in the foregoing sections of the Fifth Book (" The Jew and the Talmud ") are mainly confined to the great official work of Rabbinic Judaism known as the Talmud, made up of the Mishnah and its commentary, the Gemara.

But besides this vast compilation, it must be borne in mind that there exists an enormous mass of Rabbinic literature outside the Talmud, such as the non-canonical Mishnah, the Targumim, the Midrashim, the Kabbala, etc. Some of this dates from a very early period, and possesses a high authority among the recognized Jewish teachers.

Most of these extra-Talmudical writings are Haggadic in character.

V

THE TEXT OF THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

All this mighty superstructure of " Mishnah and Gemara," which occupied so many of the greatest and most earnest minds in Israel for several centuries, was built up on the foundations of a Law (Torah) recognised as given by God Himself. The Books containing this Law (Torah), the Pentateuch, were accepted as divine in the course of the five centuries which intervened between the return from exile and the Christian era. The Pentateuch at first constituted the canon of Jewish Scripture. Its acknowledgment, though, no doubt dates from a much older period—long before the days of the Exile. We do not, however, possess sufficient historical data to define accurately the position which the Law held in pre-exilic Israel. To the Pentateuch was subsequently added the writings of the Prophets and the sacred works belonging to the older pre-exilic history of Israel. The canon of Scripture was completed and acknowledged much in its present form certainly 200 years before the age of Jesus Christ.

But although the prophets and other writings belonging to the pre-exilic period had been subsequently added to the Torah (the Law of Moses), it is certain that they never were placed quite on a level with it.

The Massorah

After the question—What constituted the canonical writings, the Divine Word?—was finally and authoritatively settled, the next step was to ensure the preservation of the sacred text which contained the Divine Revelation. The Scribes had determined what were the canonical books. The text of these books was handed over to another group of scholars known as the Massoretes. The precise chronology of these various steps is unknown.

The word " Massorah " comes from the Hebrew " Masar," to give something into the hand of another so as to commit it

to his trust. The work and duty of the Massoretes—the authoritative custodians of the sacred text—was to safeguard it, so as to protect it from any change. This they did effectually by " building a hedge round it." To do this, they carefully registered all the phenomena in the ancient manuscripts, the reason for and meaning of many of which were not understood ; but they were carefully noted and preserved. Some words were found which had been dotted over ; some were spelt with large, some with smaller letters ; some words and expressions were archaic, that is, belonging to a much earlier date in their history ; some were suspended above the line ; some sentences contained peculiar expressions : such-like phenomena and peculiarities in the ancient MSS. were diligently recorded by the Massoretes,—none were overlooked.

Other textual notes were carefully made, such as the number of verses in each sacred book. The middle verse and word of each great section in each book and even in the whole Bible were also recorded. All important words were noted ; the number of times that each letter of the alphabet occurs in each division in each book and in the whole Bible were diligently written down. All this, and very much more of such curious statistical information, was registered by the Massoretes so as to lock and interlock every letter, word, and line into its place, that the original text of the ancient MSS. might be preserved and faithfully reproduced and handed down by any copyist who followed the direction of the Massorah.

That some of this curious elaborate work was done, that some of this vast hedge [1] round the Law was planted *before* the fall of the City and Temple in A.D. 70, is fairly certain. But there is no doubt that the extremely complicated and exhaustive work of the Massoretes to ensure the preservation of the ancient text was really elaborated and completed in those centuries after the Christian era when the composition of the Mishnah and Gemara occupied the attention of the great

[1] R. Akiba (early second century) in the Mishnah treatise " Pirke Aboth " used to say, " Massorah is a fence to the Torah." This has been generally understood as a reference to the Massorah of which we are speaking here. But many scholars now consider that R. Akiba was referring in this saying to " tradition " generally, and they understand the word Massorah as correlative to " Kabbala " (tradition in general), such as is embodied in the Mishnah.

Rabbinic academies which arose after the ruin of the City and Temple, in Palestine and in Babylonia.

This very brief sketch of the Massorah will give some idea of how exceedingly precious in the eyes of the Jew for many centuries has been the text of his loved Scriptures.

We possess no MSS. of the Hebrew Bible older than the first half of the ninth century. The reason of the non-existence of any very ancient MSS. is probably owing to the fact of the Jews being in the habit of burying old and worn-out copies of the Scriptures lest the worn material, the valuable parchment or papyrus, should be employed for any secular purpose. The text we now possess is, however, certainly that which was current in the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era, and there is little doubt that it accurately represents a much older text.

The Massoretic notes, something of the general purport of which is described above, are written above and below the three columns into which usually each page of the MS. of the Scriptures is divided. These notes are termed the "Massorah Magna"; while on the margin and between the columns are more Massoretic notes. These are termed the "Massorah Parva."

The composition of these notes, which included every phenomenon of the text, as well as a vast number of interesting statistical facts bearing on the text, went on for well-nigh a thousand years, and eventually they amounted to an enormous bulk of material. It became in time absolutely impossible to write down anything approaching to the whole of the Massorah in any single MS. Hence, whenever a new copy of the Scriptures was ordered by an individual or a community, the Massoretic scribes were in the habit of transcribing only so much of the Massorah as they deemed of especial importance and interest, or as much of the Massorah as they considered a fair equivalent for the price paid for the MS. Thus it has come about that there is no single MS. of the Old Testament which contains the whole or anything approximating to the whole Massorah. The present scholarly editor of the Massorah (Dr. Ginsberg) has some seventy-two ancient MSS. of the Old Testament collected in the British Museum, from which he is

gathering the different Massoretic notes for the monumental work on which he is engaged.

The mass of material put together by successive generations of scribes is so enormous that much of it has been even gathered into separate treatises; it having been found in old time simply impossible to find space for it in any codex, although all manner of abbreviations and signs to compress the notes into a smaller compass have been devised by the ancient scribes.

. . . . . .

Such was the Massorah, that marvellous and unique apparatus devised by the Rabbis for the preservation of the ancient text of the Scriptures. A brief sketch showing the estimation in which these Scriptures, or at all events the Law proper, the Pentateuch, was held by the great Rabbinical schools, is indispensable to this little study on the Talmud.

VI

CONCLUDING MEMORANDA

The Talmudical View of the Inspiration of the Scripture

We read in the Mishnah such statements as the following: "He who asserts that the Torah is not from heaven has no part in the world to come." (Sanhedrim, x. 7.)

As time went on this view of inspiration was held with increasing strictness. At first the commands of "the Law" were all that was signified in such a saying as the one just quoted, but gradually the whole Pentateuch was included in this assertion of the direct Divine authority; in the Mishnah we read startling sayings, such as we have already given, viz.: "He who says that Moses wrote even one word of his own knowledge is a denier and despiser of the Word of God." (Sanhedrim, 99.) Even the last verses of Deuteronomy which tell of the death of Moses were affirmed to have been written by Moses himself,—having been dictated to him by Divine revelation.

The only point in dispute was whether the whole Torah

was given to Moses by God complete at once, or handed to him by volumes. (Gittin 60*a*.)

In course of time Divine inspiration was taught as belonging to the Prophets and the Hagiographa, to the Mishnah, the Talmud, and even to the Haggadah.

A very singular *anticipatory* revelation was believed to have been made on Sinai to the prophets. In "Shemoth Rabba" we read: "What the prophets were about to prophesy in every generation they receive from Mount Sinai." The revelation was apparently made to the souls of those about to be created. And so Isaiah is represented as saying: "From the day that the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, there I was and received this prophecy,—and now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent me." [1]

The Talmud contains a somewhat similar curious teaching as regards "Miracles"—the course of creation was not disturbed by them, *they were all primarily existing, as well as pre-ordained*. They were "created" at the end of all things, in the gloaming of the sixth day. Creation, together with these so-called exceptions, once established, nothing could be altered in it. The laws of nature went on by their own immutable force, however much evil might spring therefrom.

The Talmud—Its Story through the Ages

The wonderful Jewish book—the Talmud—cannot complain of neglect or of oblivion. Never has any writing in the whole human history been so hated and hunted down. It has been proscribed and burnt again and again. Before the marvellous compilation was fully completed the Emperor Justinian, in A.D. 553, condemned it by name. Then for more than a thousand years anathemas, edicts of the sternest condemnation, were issued against the Jewish sacred volume which has done so much for the Chosen People.

[1] "It is evident that some of the 'dicta' of the Rabbis, such as, for instance, the above-quoted passages, are not intended to be taken literally, but are the paradoxes of idealists, which leave us in some doubt as to how much they supposed to have been revealed explicitly to Moses."—*Pirke Aboth* (Sayings of the Fathers), note by Dr. Taylor, Master of S. John's, Cambridge, p. 122.

Dr. Taylor, however, adds that "such statements have to be taken into account in estimating the ancient Rabbis' views of revelation."

Emperors, kings, and Popes in all lands and in every age have warred against it in each succeeding century. It was forbidden, cursed, often publicly burnt.

To give an average example of the spirit with which it was universally condemned by Christians, we would refer to a letter of Pope Honorius IV to the Archbishop of Canterbury (A.D. 1286), in which he speaks of the Talmud as "that damnable Book," desiring him "to see that it is read by no one, since all evils flow out of it."

At last, after it had been put out about 1000 years, in the dawn of the Reformation a great Christian scholar arose who defended it. Reuchlin, the most eminent Hellenist and Hebraist of his time, remonstrated against the wild and ignorant prejudice with which Christian men regarded this wonderful compilation. Long and bitter was the controversy, but the patient scholar, although formally condemned for his noble advocacy of the great Jewish book, in the end triumphed, and the Talmud this time was not burned but printed, and since Reuchlin's time has been allowed to live on unmolested. In our day and time it has come to be regarded as one of the great works of the world, although among Christian folk its contents are comparatively unknown; while its surpassing influence in the past is acknowledged in the scholar community, which recognizes neither land nor race.

. . . . . .

It has been curiously suggested that the Talmud contains many of the divine sayings of our Lord recorded in the Gospels. The fact really is, that while some few of the beautiful words of Christ are without doubt to be found in the Talmud, it is only such sayings as are common to other great teachers and thinkers, such as Seneca and the Emperor Marcus Antoninus. However, it is more than probable that the Child Jesus was conversant with some of the more striking maxims of the early Rabbis and teachers, such as Hillel and the elder Gamaliel, and that occasionally sayings of theirs are repeated in the Gospel teaching. But it is beyond all doubt that the general spirit of Rabbinism which lives through the pages of the Talmud—in the Mishnah and Gemara—was absolutely at variance with the spirit of Jesus Christ and His disciples.

To take two notable examples—the position of women and the exclusive position of Israel. The Gospel teaching is completely different on the position of women from what we find in the authoritative teaching of the Talmud treatises. With our Lord the woman was the equal in all respects of the man, in this world and in the world to come.[1] The striking inferiority of women in Israel is brought forward again and again in the sayings of the great Rabbis. We would quote a very few of their authoritative Talmudical teachings here :—

R. Meir—second century (Mishnah) : "A man is bound to repeat three benedictions every day." One of these was, "Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, who hast not made me a woman."

And again : "Are not slaves and women in the same category ? The slave is more degraded."

"Blessed is the man whose children are sons, but luckless is he whose children are daughters." (Baba Bathra.)

"The testimony of one hundred women is only equal to the evidence of one man." (Yevamoth.)

The stern exclusiveness of Israel is pressed constantly in the Talmud. This is diametrically opposed to the New Testament teaching so conclusively formulated by S. Peter (Acts x. 34, 35) : "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

While in the Talmud we read—

"Almsgiving exalteth a nation [that is, Israel], . . . but benevolence is a sin to nations,"—that is to say, for the Gentiles to exercise charity and benevolence is sin. (Compare Baba Bathra, fol. 10, col. 2.)

And again : "All Israelites have a portion in the world to come." (Sanhedrim, fol. 90, col. 1.) "The world was created only for Israel ; none are called the children of God but Israel, none are beloved before God but Israel." (Gèrim.)

[1] "For when they shall rise from the dead [men and women are both alluded to] . . . they are as the angels which are in heaven" (S. Mark xii. 25). The prominent position of women in the early Church is asserted in the "Gospels" and "Acts"; they are never alluded to as occupying an inferior place. See below, p. 380, for a further note on the position of women.

" Three things did Moses ask of God " :—1. " He asked that the Shekinah (the glory of God) might rest upon Israel." 2. " That the Shekinah might rest upon none but Israel." 3. " That God's ways might be made known unto him : and all these requests were granted." (Cf. Berachotk, fol. 7, col. 1.)

Such teachings as these from the Talmud might be multiplied indefinitely.

The Authority and Influence of the Talmud on Judaism

The influence of the Talmud on Judaism has been measureless.

In the second, third, fourth, fifth, and part of the sixth centuries which followed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Rabbinic schools of Palestine and Babylonia, where " the great book " was thought out and compiled, became for the scattered people new centres, where the old sacred learning was not only carried on, but made to shine with a yet greater splendour—a splendour never possessed in any of the ages of its long story.

And when the Book (the Talmud) was finally completed in the sixth century it was recognized throughout the scattered Jewish people as having put new life and new meaning into the sacred writings, which to a certain extent, especially in the case of the Ritual Law, naturally, after the fall of the Temple and the Holy City, had lost much of their power and special application.

Then, as time went on, " the Book " became the strongest bond of union between the exiles of the West and East ; between the Jews of Rome and Constantinople, of Alexandria and the distant East. And later, when the old Empire of Rome was dissolved and the Teutonic tribes had become masters of the Western world, the Talmud was still the bond of union between all the Jews of " the Dispersion " through the Middle Ages.

Thus the Talmud has for centuries been the link which has welded into one great people all the scattered Jewish race. For every professing Jew has felt that the great compilation embodied all the ancient cherished traditions of the people, and was persuaded that the Talmud in some respects was equal to

the Bible, especially as a source of instruction and decision in the problems of religion.

It has preserved and fostered for some fifteen hundred years in the "Dispersion" that spirit of deep religion and strict morality which has kept the Jewish people separate and intact; and be it remembered under the most unfavourable external conditions, for, with certain rare exceptions, since the days of the Emperor Constantine and the victory of Christianity the Jew has been generally hated, despised, persecuted, an exile and a wanderer over the face of the earth.

In the Jewish race the study of the Talmud has awakened and stimulated intellectual activity in an extraordinary degree. Its study has given to the world of letters a vast number of scholars, men of the loftiest character, belonging to the first rank of philosophers and writers, whose works, limited though they mostly are by the Rabbinic area of thought and speculation, have been of high service to civilization.

Among these great ones issuing from the Jews of no one land, and who form a numerous band, it is difficult in this brief study to particularize even the most distinguished, but the following names will at once occur to any competent scholar as prominent examples of famous men of the Rabbinic school, whose works have shed real light on the so-called dark mediæval period:—

Raschi	. .	A.D. *circa* 1040–1105
Maimonides	.	,, ,, 1135–1204
D. Kimchi	. .	,, ,, 1158–1235

The names, however, of distinguished scholars and writers of the Rabbinic school who have arisen during the last fifteen centuries in different lands might be multiplied almost indefinitely.

And this people is with us still, more influential, probably more numerous, than at any period of its immemorial history. The numbers at the present day are variously computed as amounting to from seven to eleven millions.

The Influence of the Talmud on Christianity

But not only among the Jewish peoples of the " Dispersion " has this strange and wonderful book exercised a surpassing influence, but even among the Christian nations of the world has its spirit percolated, and in a remarkable way has influenced and coloured certain important phases of religious thought and belief.

Among Christian peoples the Talmud is virtually unknown ; to well-nigh every individual in the Christian nations it is but the shadow of a name, to the great majority scarcely even that ; and yet the profound, the awful reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures which lives among all Christian folk, a reverence that often shades into a passionate love, though they guess it not, springs largely out of the teachings of that great Rabbinic book the *Talmud*, the very name of which so many have scarcely heard.

For the Mishnah and Gemara which make up the Talmud, the thousand treatises which have been written by learned Rabbis at different periods during the last sixteen hundred years of the Jewish Dispersion, are simply all comments upon, explanations and developments of traditions and history bearing upon the Old Testament Scriptures, the one precious heritage of the Jew handed down from generation to generation of the Chosen People from time immemorial.

This story of the changeless love of the Hebrew race for their ancient writings and records, which the Jew is never weary of reiterating, came to him direct from God Almighty, and has found an echo in unnumbered Christian hearts, and so it has come to pass that the Old Testament Scriptures—the Torah (the Law) of Moses, the Prophets, and the other sacred books—are received to this day with a deep reverential love as the expression of the will of the Eternal of Hosts, alike in Christian Churches as in the Jewish Synagogues.[1]

[1] Renan recognizes the service rendered by the Talmudical Rabbis to Christianity, but while acknowledging this, curiously limits it to the preservation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament Scriptures, which he thinks would probably have been lost but for the labours of the Rabbis of the Talmud —he characterizes this as " un service du 1er ordre." To him the Hebrew

VII

(*A*) AN APPENDIX ON THE "HAGGADAH"

Before closing this little sketch of the Talmud and of the very early Rabbinical writings, it will be well to give a somewhat more detailed explanation of one of its more important features, which we have already somewhat lightly touched upon—the "Haggadah."

It is not too much to say that the widespread, the lasting popularity of the mighty book — the Talmud — is largely owing to this special kind of exposition, which includes the Historical, the Legendary, the Homiletical, and the Comforting. It is absolutely peculiar to the Talmud; there is nothing resembling it in the official or acknowledged writings belonging to any other religious system.

In the Exile and in the lengthened period which directly followed the Exile, *i.e.* in the five centuries which intervened between the "Return from the Exile" and the Christian era, the Chosen People had learned, as we have noticed, to love their Scriptures with a great love, a love that may be termed a passion. It was then that the sacred books became, and for long centuries remained, the centre of their lives. The study of these books, the study which included research, investigation, exposition, application to every event in their lives, to every possible contingency which might happen to them, is known as *Midrash*.

Legendary history which clustered round the events related in the sacred books, details not chronicled in the text of the books, but carefully treasured up, preserved and handed down, circumstances more or less interesting and important connected with the lives of the principal Biblical personages, were gradually gathered together, were carefully sifted out and discussed by the scribes and doctors of the law, and if finally received as authentic by the great Jewish teachers,

Old Testament is an incomparable monument of history, archæology, and philology. The deeper signification of these sacred records, which in the hearts of earnest Christians constitutes their exceeding preciousness, finds little place, alas, in the cheerless conception of the brilliant French scholar.

were written down[1] and handed on from generation to generation.

This work and study especially connected with the non-legal portions of the Scriptures known as "Haggadah," certainly received a mighty impulse in the times of the Scribes before the Christian era, and reached its highest development in the famous Academies of Palestine and Babylonia which arose after the events of A.D. 70. We may roughly compute this great period of the development of the "Haggadah" as reaching from A.D. 72–100 to A.D. 500 or 550. The *creative* Haggadic activity may be said to have ceased after this last date.

Although "Haggadic" notices or comments appear not unfrequently in the exclusively legal section of the Pentateuch, they belong more especially to those Scriptures which treat of history, narrative, and teaching—including, of course, the prophetic writings. In the first instance the "Haggadic" Midrash confined itself to the simple exposition of the Scripture text, but it very soon developed into comments of a very varied nature, not unfrequently into homilies inculcating religious truths and moral maxims, into disquisitions on the past and future glories of Israel; roughly speaking, the "Haggadah" on a passage or section of the canonical Scriptures endeavoured, by penetrating beneath the mere literal sense, to arrive at the spirit of the Scripture in question. In the Talmud (Sanhedrim Treatise) it has been well compared to a hammer which awakens the slumbering sparks of a rock.

Legendary additions, of course, form an important part of the Haggadah, but these ancient traditions or legends by no means, as some suppose, constitute the bulk of this vast and wonderful commentary on the canonical or acknowledged Scriptures.

Among the sources where we find this curious Biblical literature which has been a very important link in the Talmud

[1] While it is generally acknowledged that the decisions arrived at in connection with the Law of Moses termed "Halachah" were transmitted *orally*, certainly until the time of R. Judah the Holy, known as Rabbi (end of second century), the "Haggadic" decisions here alluded to were committed to writing at a much earlier date.

chain which has been the great bond of union of the scattered Jewish race for so many centuries, of course primarily must be reckoned the Mishnah and the two Gemaras, the Palestinian and the Babylonian, which constitute the Talmud. Here are found many of those " Haggadic " comments which naturally are regarded with the deepest reverence, as they have received the seal of approval of the doctors of the great Academies of Sura, Pumbaditha, and Tiberias, who flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era.

But there are " Haggadic " notices of great antiquity and in still larger numbers preserved in writings which form the non-canonical Mishnah, works subsidiary and auxiliary to the Mishnah proper, some of which even date from the second and third century or even earlier, and have ever possessed among the learned Jews a very high authority. For example, in the Targums (Targumim) are very many pieces of an " Haggadic " nature, not a few evidently of a remote antiquity and of the highest interest.

It is, of course, impossible in the limits of such a brief sketch of so vast a subject to give any adequate illustration of this vast collection of Haggadah; we will simply quote two or three examples taken from the Palestine Targum on the Torah on the Book of Deuteronomy, where the original text is expanded by words of tradition or legend, by homiletics, by words of teaching, of comfort and encouragement.

. . . . . .

From the Palestine Targum on the Torah (Deuteronomy chap. xxxiii.). " And he (Moses) said : The Lord was revealed at Sinai to give the law unto His people of Beth Israel, and the splendour of the glory of His Shekinah arose from Gebal to give itself to the sons of Esau ; but they received it not. It shined forth in majesty and glory from Mount Pharan, to give itself to the sons of Ishmael ; but they received it not. It returned and revealed itself in holiness unto His people of Israel, and with Him ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels. He wrote with His own right hand, and gave them His law and His commandments, out of the flaming fire."

. . . . . .

" And he saw at the beginning that a place had been

prepared there for a sepulchre, a place strewn with precious stones and pearls, where Mosheh the prophet, the scribe of Israel, was to be hidden, (who) as he went in and out at the head of the people in this world, so will he go in and out in the world to come ; because he wrought righteousness before the Lord, and taught the orders of the judgments to the sons of Israel."

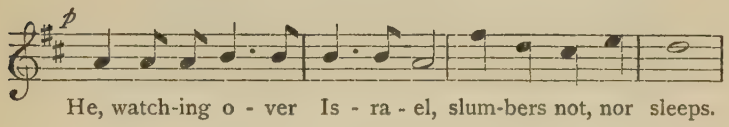
. . . . . .

"There is no God like the God of Israel, whose Shekinah and Chariot dwell in the heavens. He will be your helper. He sitteth on His glorious throne in His majesty, in the expanse of the heavens above. The habitation of Eloha is from eternity ; by the arm of His power beneath the world is upborne. He will scatter your adversaries before you, and will say by His Word, Destroy them. And Israel shall dwell safely as of old according to the benediction with which Jakob their father did bless them, for whose righteousness' sake He will cause them to inherit the good land that yieldeth corn and wine ; the heavens also above them will drop with the dews of blessing and the rains of loving-kindness. Happy are you, O Israel : who of all the nations are like you, a people saved in the Name of the Word of the Lord ? He is the shield of your help, and His sword, the strength of your excellency."

. . . . . .

From Deuteronomy chap. xxxiv. "Blessed be the Name of the Lord of the world, who hath taught us His righteous way. He hath taught us to clothe the naked, as He clothed Adam and Hava (Eve) ; He hath taught us to unite the bridegroom and the bride in marriage, as He united Hava (Eve) to Adam. He hath taught us to visit the sick, as He revealed Himself to Abraham when he was ill from being circumcised ; He hath taught us to console the mourners, as He revealed Himself again to Jakob when returning from Padan in the place where his mother had died. He hath taught us to feed the poor, as He sent Israel bread from heaven ; He hath taught us to bury the dead by (what He did for) Mosheh ; for He revealed Himself in His Word, and with Him the companies of ministering angels : Michael and Gabriel spread forth the golden bed, fastened with chrysolites, gems, and

beryls, adorned with hangings of purple silk, and satin, and white linens. Metatron, Jophiel, and Uriel, and Jephephya, the wise sages, laid him upon it, and by His Word conducted him four miles, and buried him in the valley opposite Beth Peor ;—that Israel, as oft as they look up to Peor, may have the memory of their sin ; and at the sight of the burying-place of Mosheh may be humbled ; but no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day."



(*From Mendelssohn's Oratorio*, "Elijah.")

VIII

(*B*) ON THE "HALACHAH" AND "HAGGADAH"

We would add a few words further explanatory of the Halachah. The Halachic Midrash (or exegesis and development of the passages of the Law) dealt with the exact purport of the various Divine commands contained in the Torah, or Law of Moses. It explained in detail how these precepts were to be carried out in common life. It professed to be nothing more than an exposition of the original Law; but in reality it contained vast additions to what was written in the Books of Moses, and claimed to possess an equal authority with the original charges contained in the Pentateuch.

Roughly, these so-called Halachic developments were divided into three classes or categories—

1. Halachah or commands traced back to Moses.
2. A great mass of Halachah—containing *traditional* ordinances professedly based on the original Mosaic commands, but in reality connected with the Mosaic ordinances by the very slightest of ties.
3. A number of enactments really only emanating from the schools of the Scribes, but which were taught to be equally binding with the original Pentateuch ordinances. These Halachah largely dated from the years which preceded the Christian era; they were, in the last half of the first century and during the second century, codified and arranged in the Mishnah.

The general purport of the Halachic Midrash, which contains the rule of Israelitic life and which so long occupied the Scribes and their schools, was very largely connected in the first place with the elaborate network of sacrifice, and the usages which followed and preceded the many and complicated

various offerings. The Halachah might fairly be called The Law and Rule of Jewish Ritual. Its subject-matter has been well and tersely summed up as follows: The Halachic Midrash sought to establish, by laws which were absolutely binding on every true Jew, the manner in which God desires to be honoured; what sacrifices are to be offered to Him, what feasts and fasts are to be kept in His honour, and generally what religious rites are to be observed by the people. Other questions are, however, discussed and resolved in the Halachah, but these other points fill after all a comparatively small space in the great legal commentary or ritual which occupies so important a place in the vast Talmud compilation.

Haggadah

The writer of the foregoing "study" feels that a sadly incomplete picture of the "Haggadah," the popular division of the Talmud, has been painted. A few more remarks on this singular and important portion of the Talmud are given by way of further elucidation of this strange form of exegesis (Midrash) of the Holy Scriptures.

We have already stated that broadly the "Halachic" Midrash or exegesis belongs especially to the Books of the Pentateuch, and the "Haggadic" Midrash rather to the other Books of the Old Testament writings.

But even in the Pentateuch, *narrative and history* occupy a wide space, and in the Pentateuch Midrash we find too a mass of Haggadic commentary on the narrative and historic portions of the five Books of Moses.

Here the "Book of Jubilees" (century 1) may be quoted as a striking instance of early Haggadic Midrash or exegesis of Scripture. It reproduces the Book of Genesis, and curiously amplifies and largely supplements the original text.

Dwelling on the history of Creation, the Haggadic scribe tells us how "in the twilight on the evening before the first Sabbath, ten things were created—(1) The chasm in the earth, in which Korah and his company were swallowed up. (2) The opening of Miriam's well. (3) The mouth of Balaam's ass. (4) The Rainbow. (5) The Manna of the Wilderness.

(6) The famous Shamir, the worm which splits stones, traditionally used in the making of the Tabernacle and its furniture. (7) The Rod of Moses. (8) Alphabetic writing. (9) The writing of the Tables of the Law. (10) The stone tables on which the Ten Commandments were written."

The devout student of the Old Testament will read with deep interest the above-quoted reference to the purely Haggadic passage taken from the " Book of Jubilees," in which an allusion is made to the ass who reproved Balaam.

This is one of the recitals in the Old Testament Scriptures which has ever, for various reasons, been a difficulty, when regarded as a piece of actual history. Its appearance in the " Book of Jubilees " among other evidently Haggadic or purely legendary amplifications of the original text, suggests that even in the Pentateuch the inspired compiler has occasionally introduced in his narrative details which in the opinion of the very early Scribes belonged evidently to the realm of Haggadah or legend.

In the Haggadah of the Pentateuch a vast cycle of legends accompanies the original Genesis account of famous heroes of Israelitic history, such as Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and Aaron.

A good specimen of Haggadic legendary amplification is given above in the extract from the Jerusalem Targum on Deut. xxxiv., where the death of Moses and the circumstances attending his burial are related. Again, one of the canonical writings of the Old Testament, the Book of Chronicles, is a fair example of the less fanciful Haggadic historical Midrash. Here the compiler of the book in question adds to the original record of the Jewish kings a number of details not found in the Books of Kings and in the older histories of Israel.

The Haggadah specially enlarges at great length, and with much detail, the passages which even remotely refer to the future, to the angels, and to the heavenly world ; it amplifies all the mystic sections which deal with the glory of the Eternal, such as the " chariot " of Ezekiel, that wonderful introductory vision of his great prophecy.

Even in the New Testament Epistles and in the " Acts," Haggadic influence is noticeable in several well-known pas-

sages; for instance, in S. Paul's 2nd Epistle to Timothy iii. 8, the names of the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres, which do not appear in the Genesis history, are given. A still more remarkable example of Haggadic influence is the singular legendary account of the Rock in 1 Cor. x. 4, where the rock from which, at Moses' bidding, the water gushed forth is represented as positively accompanying the Irsaelites during their desert wanderings. Again, in Acts vii. 53, Gal. iii. 19, Heb. ii. 2, the Law is represented, not as given to Moses by God Himself, as related in the Pentateuch, but as reaching him through the medium of angels.

IX

WOMEN'S DISABILITIES

Among the disabilities of the women [1] of Israel nothing is more remarkable than the position they occupied in the public services of the congregation. The Inner Court of the Temple, within which the whole of the official worship was celebrated, was divided by a wall into two divisions—a Western and an Eastern. The latter (the Eastern)—the more remote from the Temple proper—was called "the Court of the Women," not however because none but women were admitted to it, but because women as well as men were allowed to enter it.

The *Western* division was reserved exclusively for men; in this division stood the Temple proper, including the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

In front of the Temple, to the West, stood the great altar of burnt-offering, at which, except in the matter of incense-burning, every act of sacrifice had to be performed. In this Western division of the Inner Court the victims were slaughtered. The Temple itself with the great altar of burnt-offering was again surrounded by an enclosure, within which as a rule none but priests might enter. This enclosure was sometimes called the Court of the Priests.

The men of Israel, however, being admitted into the Western division of the Inner Court, were spectators of and so assisted at the sacrifices offered on the great altar, from which they were only separated by the enclosure—into which, however, in certain circumstances, they were admitted.

But the women were never allowed to enter the Western division of the Inner Court—never might pass the wall of separation—never as it were assist at the sacrifices and the solemn ritual of the great altar which stood at the Western entrance of the Temple.

[1] See on page 367 for further details on the position held by women in Israel.

INDEX

"Aboth," treatise, 358 *n.* 1
Acilii Glabriones family, Crypt of, 265, 267, 268–9, 270–1; was Pudens a member of? 270
Acilius Glabrio, Consul, martyrdom of, 41–2, 230–1, 269
Acta Sincera, of Ruinart, on Martyrdom of Theban legion, 148 *n.* 1
Acts of the Apostles, Haggadic influence seen in, 379; model of, 72; on Christian assemblies, 107; on S. Paul's prison life at Rome, 22; on status of women, 367 *n.* 1
Acts of S. Cecilia, in the light of catacomb discoveries, 289 *et seq.*
Acts of S. Hermes, 274
Acts of Martyrdom, or *Acts and Passions of the Martyrs*, archæological and literary corroboration of, 81, 82, 94 *& n.* 1
Critical estimates of, 81 *& nn.*, 82, 258
Few in early days, 33, 35, 48, 53
Pagan contempt shewn in, 158
Value of, in exploring Catacombs, 226
on Numbers of Christians, 104
on Persecutions, 163
Acts of the Martyred Slaves, 136
Acts of the Passion of S. Felicitas, 299; authenticity of, 300, 304
Acts of Pastor and Timotheus, tradition in, on Pudens and his family, 263–5
Acts of S. Valentinus, 276
Ælia Capitolina, site of, 77; insults at, to Christians, 78; results of building, 332, 335–6 *et seq.*
Ælius Verus, adopted by Hadrian, 83
Æneas, piety of, 87
Æneid, teaching of, 88
Africa (*see* Carthage, *see also* Egypt), Christian congregations in, mid-second century, 36
Agaunum (S. Maurice), Martyrdom legend concerning, 148 *n.* 1
Agrippa, builder of Pantheon portico, 280
Akiba, Rabbi, eminence of, and of his pupils, 337, 354–6
Fate of, 355 *& n.* 1
Supporter of Bar-cochab, 78, 336–7
on Massorah, 362 *n.* 1
Alcuin, 278
Aldus Manutius, supporting Pliny's letter, 46
Alemanni, death of, 283
Alexander, son of S. Felicitas, tomb of, 259
Alexandria, Jewish revolts in, 330, 334–5, 346; literary support from, of Petrine tradition, 10, 13; plague of, 155 *n.* 2
Alexandrian-Jewish influences in Revelation of S. John, 72
Allard, —, on Acilius Glabrio, 269; on Archæology as rehabilitating legend, 289; on Jewish fecundity, first century, in Rome, 5 *n.* 1; on the Jews in the Augustan age, 4; on Nero's persecution and popular disgust, 42 *n.* 2; on the Martyrdom of the Theban legion, 148 *n.* 1; on Pliny's letter, 46; on S. Peter's arrival in Rome, 19 *n.* 1; on Trajan's personality, 48
Translation by, of the Epitaph of Pope Damasus, 215 *n.* 1
Almsgiving, in the early Church, 113, 119–22, 123, 130 *et seq.*, 138, 139
America, Civil War of, cause of, 135 *n.* 1
Amoraim, the, 345, 358 *n.* 1, 359
Amphitheatre games, horrors of, 50; Martyrdoms in, 110, 172, 175–6; training of Christians for, 198
Ampliatus, Chapel or Crypt of, Domitilla Cemetery, 240
Tomb of, identification of, 241–2

Anacletus, Pope, cemetery of, 287; discoveries in, seventeenth century, 280 *et seq.*
Memoriæ erected by, over tombs of SS. Peter and Paul, 233, 237, 281 *et seq.*
Ananias and Sapphira, gift of, voluntary, 120 *n.* 1
Anchor, as Christian Emblem, 310
Angels, Haggadic references to, 378, 379
Animals, wild, in amphitheatre games, exposure to, of Christians, &c., 175–6, 178, 183, 185, 187, 191, 203, 204, 269
Anniversaries of Martyrs, first celebrated, 35
Antioch (*see also* Ignatius), literary support from, of Petrine tradition, 9, 13
Antipas, martyr, 169
Antonines, the (*see also* Antoninus Pius *and* Marcus Aurelius), reigns of, 63, characteristics of, 84 *et seq.*; table of succession of, 83
Antonins, Les, by De Champagny, on Hadrian's character, 77 *n.* 1; on the number of Jews slain in the last wars, 338 & n. 2
Antoninus Pius, 186, 277, adopted by, and successor to, Hadrian, 83, family and character of, 83, 84, 85
Attitude of, to Christians, 158, ignorance of their faith, 77
Coinage of, 87, 90
Persecutions by, and reasons for, 33, 80, 81, 84, 91–3, 95, 137, 163 *n.* 2, 194, 207
Relations of, with Hadrian, 83, 85
Apocalypse of S. John, 72; place of, in early Christian thought, 156–7; references in, to Persecution, 37, 157, 165, 167–70
Apologies, The, of Justin Martyr, 128, 184
on Assemblies, 108, 113–4
on Persecution, 185–6
Apology of Aristides, on Burial of the dead by Christians, 132, 133; on Christian charity, 124 & n. 1, 126, 130, 138; on Christians as civil judges, 148; on Hospitality, 128, on Slavery, 135
Apology, or *Embassy*, of Athenagoras, on Persecution, 188–9
Apology of Tertullian, and the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, 186
Apostasy, encouraged by Roman rulers, 195, 197; Hermas on, 181; results of, 197, 203; some causes, 201
Apostolical Constitutions, The, on Almsgiving, 122; on Hospitality, 128
Apostolic Fathers, writings of, cast in Letter form, 73
Apostolic Fathers, by Lightfoot, *cited* on Pliny's Letters, 46 *n.* 1; on S. Hippolytus, 251
Apostolic remains, authors and form of, 73; characteristics and special value of, *ib.*, meant for publication, 74 & *n.* 1
Apronienus, catacomb of, 248
Aquila and Priscilla, associations of, with S. Paul, and with Pudens, 265–6; burial-place of, 262, 266; church founded by, 262
Arch of Titus, witness of, 333 & *n.* 1
Archæological Relics of S. Peter, Chair, and place of baptism, 12
Archæology, witness of, to literature and tradition (*see also* Catacombs), 17, 19 *n.* 1, 81, 82, 108, 147, 152 *n.* 1, 209 *et seq.*, 289, 295, 298, 304
to Pagan and Christian views on Death, 154–5
to Social Status of many early Christians, 111–2
Arenaria, in Jordani catacomb, 260
Aristides, *see Apology* of, *supra*
Aristotle, works of, 146
Arles, Church of S. Hippolytus at, 255
Armellini, Prof., on Inscription concerning S. Agnes, 256-7; Ubaldi's memoranda published by, 281; work of, in Catacomb exploration, 239
Army, Christians in, 148 & *n.* 1
Arnold, Matthew, on the Good Shepherd with the Kid, 320
Arsacius, Letter to, from Emperor Julian, on Christian characteristics, 123 *n.* 1, 128, 131
Arval Brotherhood, College of, 236; M. Aurelius a member, 95 *n.* 1
Asia, Christian congregations in, mid-second century, 36
Asia Minor (*see also* Antioch, &c.), 71
Christianity in (*see also* Pliny's Letter), founder, and effects on Paganism, and spread of, 51, 107
S. John's prominence in, 9

Assemblies, Christian, composition of, 110–12, 113, 114, 240, 242
Importance of, 101, evidenced in literary references, 107–9
Joy in, 155
Places where held (*see also* Catacombs), 139
Proceedings at, various writers *cited*, 113 *et seq.*
References to, in N.T. and later writers, Christian and Pagan, 107 *et seq.*
Sunday, 108, observance of, Justin Martyr on, 113–4
Teaching, doctrines and ritual at, 101, 113 *et seq.*, 124, 126, 128–30, 131–3, 138, 139
Astolphus, 293
Athenagoras, 319 *n.* 1, on Persecutions, 188–9
Attire, Rigourist teaching on, 153–4
Aubé, on the Acts of S. Felicitas, 300; on Domitian's persecution, 42 *n.* 2; on Trajan's Rescript, 49
Augustus Cæsar, 91, 280; attitude of, to Imperial cultus, 42; favour shown by, to the Jews, 3; and the source of Rome's greatness, 88, 89
Ausonius, poems of, 64
Autolycus, letters or books to, from Theophilus of Antioch, 108–9, 189
Auvergne, 66
Aventine Hill, church on, 262; house, &c., of Pudens on, 12, 15
Avitus, made Emperor, 65

Baba-Bathra treatise, in the Talmud, 343 *n.* 1
Babylon, mystic name for Rome, 8, 10, 14
Babylonia (*see also* Exile), Jews in, 346
Rabbinic Schools of, 326, 362–3, 368, 373
Chief, 358 *n.* 1
Mode of teaching in, 357, 358–60
Work of, 344, 345, 346, 372
Babylonian Gemara, the, 356 & *n.* 4
Talmud, the, 345, Haggadic notices in, 358 *n.* 1
Baiæ, death at, of Hadrian, 83
Balaam and his ass, Haggadah on, 377, 378
Balbina, tomb of, 247
Baptisteries (*see also* Wells) in Catacombs of Pontianus, and S. Priscilla, 236
Baptistery of S. Peter, site of, identified by Marucchi, 12, 257, 267, 271–3
Barberini (Pope Urban VIII), epigram on, 280
Bar-cochab, false Messiah, cause of last war of the Jews, 336–7; his Rabbinical supporters, 78, 336–7, 354, 355
Barnabas, Epistle of, *see* Epistles
Barnes, —, *cited* on Neronic burning of Christians, 285–6; on S. Peter's tomb, 281 & *n. et seq.*
Baronius, Cardinal, 263, present at finding of S. Cecilia's body, 294 & *n.* 1, 297; on S. Petronilla, 277
Basil of Cappadocian Cæsarea, 138
Basilicas:—
of S. Lawrence "ad Corpus," Popes buried in, 250
Domitilla, 278
Prætextatus, 247
SS. Hermes and Basilissa, 274–5
in Cœmeterium Majus, subterranean, 258
in Rome, third century number and appointments of, 112
Ruined, crypts beneath, 228
of S. Agnes, 256–7
of S. Cecilia, 292, 293 *et seq.*
of S. Felicitas, 302
of S. Hippolytus, 251, 254
of S. Laurence, 250, 254
of S. Sylvester, burials in, 266 & *n.* 1, 272
When and why erected, 272
Benson, Archbishop, on S. Cyprian, 122 & *n.* 1, 127 *n.* 1
Bernini, Baldachino by, in S. Peter's, discoveries on erection of, 233 *n.* 1, 280 *et seq.*
Bethel, the old prophet of, 321
Bethia, Zealot head-quarters, 336
"Billicum confessionis," nature of, that of S. Peter, 237, 282
Bishops and Popes of Rome (*see under* Names), claim to be successors of S. Peter, undisputed, 16
Catalogues of, on date of Linus's accession, 14; to Eleutherius, 15
Early, buried around S. Peter, *see* Papal Crypt
Bithynia and Pontus, 57, 58, 62
Christians in (*see also* Pliny's letter), 27, 32, 35 *n.* 1, 45 *et seq.*, 50, 71, 75, 77, 103 & *n.* 2, 110, 177
Bliss, instant, after Death, Christian hope of, 156

"Book of Jubilees," subject-matter of, 377, 378
Borghesi, Cardinal, 300, re-interment by, of S. Sebastian, 244
Bosio, —, pioneer of Catacomb exploration, 223–4; present at discovery of S. Cecilia's body, 294 *&n.* 1, 297
Bourges, mention at, of S. Petronilla as S. Peter's daughter, 278
Brescia, relics of S. Hippolytus at, 255
Brotherhood character of early Christianity, 38, 122–3, 270
Builders, of Basilicas, &c., injury done by, to Catacombs, 250, 257
Burial customs, Jewish, Christian, and Pagan, 4, 5, 131–3, 264
Bury St. Edmunds, cult of S. Petronilla in, 278

CÆCILIAN family, the, Christians and martyrs of, burial-place of, 245, 291, 296–7 *&n.* 1
Cæcilius, pagan interlocutor in *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, 146, 186; arguments of, source of, 145; contempt of, for Christians, 158; on Christian love, 119, 129
C. Aurelius, Censor, 233
Caius, Bishop or Pope of Rome, burial-place of, identified, 231; martyred relations of, 259 *n.* 1
Caius, Presbyter, 282; on the Memoriæ of the Apostles in Rome, 11
Caligula, Emperor, and the Imperial cultus, 42 *n.* 1
Callistus, Bishop or Pope of Rome, and martyr, once a slave, 136 *n.* 1
  Cemetery or Catacomb of, 234, 236–7, 239, 240, 242, 244–6, 251, 261
    Inscription of Damasus once in, on numbers of martyrs, 215 *&n.* 1
    Papal burial-place (*q.v.*), 231, 245–6, 273
Callistus group of Catacombs, 212
Carthage, Church of (*see also* S. Cyprian), aid from, to other Churches, 131
  Literary support from, of Petrine tradition, 10–11, 13
  Plague at, charity of S. Cyprian and his flock during, 123 *n.* 1, 127
"Catacombas, ad," *see* S. Sebastian
Catacombs or Cemeteries, *see also under* Names of Saints, *&c.*, *and under* Via, *and see* Inscriptions, Itineraries, and Translation
  Decorations of, deductions from, 133, 147, 219, 220, 221
  Exploration of—
    beginning, 223 *&n.* 1
    progress, 224 *et seq.*
    results, 219, 220–1, 224, 225, 230 *et seq.*
    Workers, *see* Bosio, De Rossi, Marchi, Marucchi
  Extent and content of, 133 *et seq.*, 220, 233 *et seq.*
  Jewish burials in, 4
  Literature bearing on, 209–14, 226–8
  Number of, De Rossi on, 232
  Origin of, in general, 38
  Rediscovery of, 223 *&n.* 1, 244
  Restorations of, by Pope Damasus, 152 *n.* 1
  Teaching in, *passim*; on Death, 309–11
  Three oldest, 266
  Tombs in, *passim*
  Uses of, 133, 139, 220 *et alibi*
    for worship, 118, 253, 258
  Witness of, to *Acts of Martyrs*, 81, 82
    to Christ, 308, 310, 311, 316–20 *&nn.*
    to Early Christian history and tradition, 105, 111–2, 133, 163 *n.* 1, 209, *et seq.* 219–21
Catalogues of Roman Bishops on date of Linus's accession, 14
Celestinus, Pope, burial-place of, 272
Cemeteries (*see also* Catacombs), Christian names for, 155
Cerinthian heresy, 23 *n.* 1
Chair of S. Peter, long shown, 12
Charity among Jews in Rome, 4
Charlemagne, 278
Christ, Sayings of, 366
  Teaching of, contrasted with Talmudic, 366–8
  With a Kid, Tertullian on, 319; M. Arnold's verses on, 320
  Witness to, of the Catacombs, 308, 310, 311, 316–20 *&nn.*
Christian Institutions, by Dean Stanley, on the Good Shepherd, 318 *&n.* 1, 319 *n.* 1
Christian, name treated as crime, 39, 189, 191
  Relatives of Emperors, 110, 112, 148, 240, 241
  Religion, powerful factor in spread of, 102–3

Christian—(*continued*)
Testimony to spread of Christianity, in the New Testament and after, 107–9
Unity, its double bond of Doctrine and Love, 118–9
Writers, early, on Numbers of Christians, 101, 208, words *cited*, 103–6
on Persecutions, &c., 36, 37, 81, 82, 163–5, 166–7, 177–91, 208; words *cited*, 103–6
Christianity, *see also* Martyrs, Persecutions, *&c.*
Early, connection of, with Judaism, 325
Growth of, 37 *et seq.*, 107, 150 *& n.* 1, 151
Importance to, of history of the Jews after the last Wars, 326 *et seq.*
of the Talmud, 326, 327, 348, 370 *& n.* 1
Influence on, of Rabbinical studies, 326–7
Menace of, to Judaism after the Dispersion, 355
Roman view of, after Jewish War of Extermination, 78, 79, 80
Christians, *see* Pliny's letter, *see also* Idol-worship, Incense, *and* Persecutions
Accused of burning Rome, 27, and burned by Nero, 28–9
Classes composing, 101, 110–12, 148, 240, 241, 291, 296–70 *& n.* 1, 299, 307–8
Discriminated from Jews, 27, 30, 92, 164, 341
Expelled from Rome by Claudius, 25
Fanatics among, 97
Guerdon of the faith of, 154 *et seq.*
Jewish opposition to, in Rome, 18
Life of, in early days, 33–7, 101 *et seq.*, 78–81, 140 *et seq.*
Numbers of, and of Martyrs (*q.v.*), 28, 46 *n.* 1, 53, 215; witnesses to, 82 *& n.* 1, 101, 103–6
Schools of teaching among, two, 101
Christology of the Catacombs, 220; of S. Paul, 23–4
Chronicles, Book of, Haggadic expansion of, 378
Church calendars, Martyrs first mentioned in, 208
Church, The, in the Empire, cited, see under Ramsay
Church of the Propaganda, S. Hyacinthus's remains in, 275
Church of Rome (*see also* Rome, Christians in, *&c.*), early importance of, 16, 17
Cicero, the first great letter-writer, epistolary style of, 67, 71; fashion set by, 56–7, 58, 64; period of, 56; popularity of, 69
on the Jews in Rome, 3; on Slaves, 134
Circumcision forbidden to Jews in Rome, 335
Civil service, Christians in, 144, 145, 148–9
Civil War, U.S.A., causes of, 135 *n.* 1
Claudian, poems of, 64
Claudius, Emperor, 235, expulsion by, of Jews, from Rome, 8, 18, 25; S. Peter at Rome during reign of, 11, 12, 14
Claudius Gothicus, Emperor, martyrs in reign of, 262, 276
Clement of Alexandria, 179; teaching of, 138; writings by, *see Pædagogus*; *cited* in support of Petrine tradition, 10, 13; on Christians living in the world, 146; on Christians of wealth, 111 *& n.* 1
Clement VIII, Pope, and the finding of S. Cecilia's body, 294, 297; and S. Peter's tomb, 282
Clermont, Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of, 66
Clitumnus fountain, Pliny's description of, 60
"Clivium Cucumeris, ad," Catacomb so called, 275
Codex Sinaiticus, *The Shepherd* of Hermas included in, 179–80
Cœlian Hill, church on, Saints buried in, 249
"Cœmeterium Majus," chief interest of, and other names of, 255, 257–8; subterranean church in, 258
Cœmeterium Ostrianum, 255, 257, 271
"Cognitiones," the, 43, 50
Cologne, relics of S. Laurence at, 255
Colosseum, the, martyrdoms in, 172
Column of the Passion, at S. Zeno's chapel, 263
Commentaries on the Gospels, &c., by Theophilus of Antioch, 189
Commodilla, catacomb of, 236, 238
Commodus, Emperor, 333 *n.* 2
Apology of Athenagoras addressed to, 188
Attitude of, to Christians, 97, 147, 164, 208

Communion of Saints, early Christian view on, 307 *et seq.*
Communism and the early Church, 120 &c. *n.* 1, 130
Constantine the Great (*see also* Peace of the Church), 197, 369
  Basilicas built by, to
    S. Agnes, 256–7
    S. Paul, 237, 238
    S. Peter, 233, 237–8, 273, 279–80, 282–3
  Edict of Milan issued by, 150
  Memoria built by, to S. Laurence, 250
Corinth, Epistles to, of S. Clement, S. Ignatius, S. Paul, and Pope Soter, *see under* Epistles
  Literary support from, of Petrine tradition, 10, 13
  SS. Peter and Paul at, 10
Cornelius, Bishop or Pope, of Rome, and martyr, tomb of, 243, discovery of, 246
  on Almsgiving by the Roman Church, 105, 120; on the number of the Christians at Rome, 105, 106
Council, the, of Jerusalem, 8
"Couples," the, and the oral Law, 339, 340
Crassus, Consul, 56
Creation legends in "Book of Jubilees," 377–8
Cremation, not practised by Jews, 4
Crescentius, martyr, tomb of, 266
Cross on S. Peter's sarcophagus, 282–3
Cruelty, Pagan and Christian, Rutilius on, 159
Crusaders, Itineraries for, 210, 227
Crypts, famous, *see* Acilii Glabriones Lucina, Papal, Platonia, Prætextatus, SS. Cecilia, Januarius, Priscilla, Silanus, &c.
  Age of, how determined, 267
  Identification of, by De Rossi, 225, 230 &c. *n.* 1, 242
  Local indications of presence of, 228–9
Cureton, Canon, and the Ignatian Epistles, 173 *n.* 1
Cyprus, Zealot revolt in, 334–5
Cyrene, Jews of, 346, revolt of, 334–5
Cyrinus, martyr, tomb of, 243

Damasus, Pope, 263, 272, 301
  Epistle of, honouring S. Felicitas, 259
  Inscriptions of, aid of, to Catacomb explorers, 229–30; one *cited* on many martyrs buried together, 215 &c. *n.* 1
Damasus—(*continued*)
  and the Martyrs at tomb of SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, 261
  Work of, in the Catacombs, decoration, inscriptions, and epitaphs, 152 *n.* 1, 215 &c. *n.* 1, 229–30, 249, 252, 275, 291–2, 296 *n.* 1, 297, 302, 305
Daniel, the prophet, and Idol-worship, 149
  Book of, *cited* on Almsgiving, 121
David, King, 352
Dead, burying of, by Early Christians, 120, 131–3, 264
Death, Christian attitude to, 154–5, 309, 311
  Pagan attitude to, 59 *n.* 1, 83, 313–4
De Boissier, —, on Pliny's letter, 46; on the School for Martyrdom, 198 *n.* 1
De Broglie, —, on Toleration shown by early Christian teachers, 142–3
De Champagny, —, on Hadrian's character, 77 *n.* 1; on number of Jews destroyed in the last wars, 338 &c. *n.* 2
Decius Aurelius, Emperor, persecutions under, 40, 97, 163 *n.* 2, 250, 254, martyrs in, 236, reason for, 194
Decoration of Catacombs, evidence from, and teaching of, 225, 267, 268, 269, 292, 301–2, 308 *et seq.*; portraits among, 296; value of, to explorers, 229
Deissmann, Prof., on the Epistles, as written for publication, 71
Deities associated with Rome, 87, 89
De Rossi, G., Archæological work of, 209, 239, 246, 260, 261, 267
  Excavations and discoveries by, 12, 42, 224, 246, 247, 254, 266 *n.* 1, 274
    Results, 225, 230 *et seq.*
  Value to, of Itineraries, 226 *et seq.*, 242, 243, 246, 247
  on Acilius Glabrio, 269; on the *Acts of S. Felicitas*, 300; on Cœmeterium Majus as S. Peter's Baptistery, 257; on Common tombs of martyrs, 215 *n.* 1; on Crypt of Lucina, 245; on Epitaphs in the Catacombs, 310; on the "Ostrian" Cemetery, 255, 257; on the place of martyrdom of S. Chrysan-

De Rossi, G.—(*continued*)
thus, 260; on Pudens, 265, 270; on S. Cecilia's burial-place, 289, 291, 292, 293 *n.* 1, 295–7, 298; on scenes of S. Peter's work, 12, 257, 267, 271; on S. Petronilla, 277; on S. Priscilla's Catacomb, 261–2; on the Tomb of Ampliatus, 241–2; on the Tombs of Sons of S. Felicitas, 301–2
Despots, the malady of, 26, 82
Deuteronomy, Rabbinic claim for last verses of, 343, 364
"Devising new things," a crime under Domitian, 269
Dialogue with the Jew Trypho, by Justin Martyr, 184, on Persecution, 185–6
Diana, worship of, 195
Didaché, the, teachings of, 138, on Almsgiving, 121, 123, on Assemblies, 108, on Hospitality, 128, on Slaves and Masters, 135
Dill, Prof., *cited* on Roman wish for posthumous remembrance, 59 *n.* 1
Diocletian, Emperor, 75
Baths of, 302
Christian relations of, 148
Christians at Court of, 147
Persecutions under, 97, 163 *n.* 2, 236, 244, 246, 249, 266
Martyrs in, 234, 239, 259 *n.* 1, 260, 276; official records of Roman martyrdoms destroyed in his reign, 225
Protracted, light on, from Catacombs, 231
Reasons for, 42 *&* *n.* 1, 194
Severity of, reaction after, 151
Diognetus, Letter to, by unknown writer, on Persecution, 177–8, suggested date, 178 *&* *n.* 1
Dion Cassius, 75, 269, on Domitian's executions, 41; on the last wars of the Jews, 328 *n.* 1; on Nerva's treatment of Christians, 171
Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, on Christians at Court, 147; on Roman generosity to other Churches, 131
Dionysius of Corinth, *cited* on Alms to other Churches from Rome, 130–1; in support of Petrine tradition, 10, 13
Dionysius, Pope, martyr, tomb of, 243
Docetic teaching, heresy of, 23 *n.* 1
"Domine quo vadis," Church, and legend of, 239
Domitian, Emperor, Arch of Titus finished by, 333 *n.* 1
Christian relatives of, 110, 112; burial-place of, 240, 241
Emperor worship enforced by, 170
Fate of, 42 *&* *n.* 2, 43, 48, 171
Persecutions under, 32, 171, 172, 173, 174, 207, 255, 269; reasons for, and severity of, 40–2, 194
Triumph of, 333
Domitilla, catacomb of, 261
Age, grandeur, and size of, 240, 266
Basilica in, 278
Builder of, 112
Discovery of, 230, and discoveries in, 239, 240–2
Flavian tombs in, 277
S. Petronilla buried in, 279
Domitilla, two Princesses so named, martyred by Domitian, 41, 230
Doulcet, —, ref. to, 300
Dove, in Christian symbolism, 310
Drei, Benedetto, plan by, of Vatican Cemetery (ancient), 287–8
Dryden, John, poem by on S. Cecilia, 294 *n.* 1
Duchesne, —, on Christianity as equivalent to Martyrdom, 37; on *The Shepherd* of Hermas, 179 *&* *n.* 1, 181; on S. Cecilia's burial-places, 293 *n.* 1; term used by, for Church of Rome, 16 *&* *n.* 1

EADBURG, Queen, 279
Early Christian writers and teaching on Slavery, 135, 136–7
Ebert and others on relative dates of Tertullian and Minucius Felix, 186
Edict against Christians issued by Nero, 32, 54
of Milan, 150
Education, difficulties concerning, of Early Christians, 141–2
Église, L', Chrétienne, ref. by Renan, on Hermas's *Shepherd*, 180
Église, L', et l'Empire Romain, by De Broglie, on early Christian toleration, 142–3
Egypt, *see* Alexandria
Einsiedeln, Itinerary of, *cited*, 212; date, 227
"Syllogæ" at, 230

Elders and Judges, and the Law, 339, 349
Elements of the Faith, by Theophilus of Antioch, 189
Eleutherius, Bishop or Pope of Rome, burial-place of, 287; list of predecessors of, 15
Elisha, prophet, on Ceremonial idolatry, 149
Emblems used in the Catacombs, 310 *et alibi*
Emperor-worship, 42 & *n.* 1, 169, 170, 181, 194, 195
England, crusade of, against Slavery, Lecky on, 135 *n.* 1
Ephesians, Epistles to, *see* Epistles
Ephesus, the "highway of martyrs," 173
Epistles or Letters, anonymous, *see* Diognetus, Hebrews, Polycarp
  Apostolic, 73–4, on Persecution, 165, 166–7
  of New Testament writers, 70–2
  Catholic, 71, 72
  Pastoral, 72
  Patristic, on Persecution, 165, 170–6
  by Various writers, Christian and Pagan; *see also* S. Cyprian
    Barnabas, 74
      on Assemblies, 108; on Christ's atonement, 116-7
      tradition on, 73
    Cicero, 56–7, 58, 64, 67, 69, 71
    Dionysius of Corinth to the Roman Church, 130–1
    Fronto, to M. Aurelius, 63–4 & *n.* 1, 85, 86–7
    Horace, 69 *n.* 1
    Julian, Emperor, to Arsacius, 123 *n.* 1, 128, 131
    Ovid, 69 *n.* 1
    Pliny the younger (*q.v.*), 57, 59–62
    Polycarp, 73, 125
    S. Clement of Rome,
      to the Corinthians, 73
        First, 37, 104 & *n.* 2, 126, 128, 165, 170–2; teaching of, 138; *cited* in support of Petrine tradition, 9
        Second, so called, 104 *n.* 2, 121 & *n.* 1
    S. Ignatius of Antioch, 73
      Authenticity of, 165, 172–3 & *n.* 1
      to Corinth, 108, 172–6
      to Ephesus, 173
      to Magnesians, 174
      to Polycarp, 108
Epistles or Letters—(*continued*)
    S. Ignatius of Antioch—(*continued*)
      to Rome, 9, 37, 154, 173, 174–5, 199, 204–5
      to Tralles, 173
    S. James, meant for publication, 71; on Assemblies, 107; on wealthy Christians, 110; on "pure religion," 126
    S. John,
      First, meant for publication, 71, 72
      Third, on Hospitality, 129
    S. Jude, meant for publication, 71, 72
    S. Paul, two classes of, 70–2
      to Colossians, 23–4, 70
      to Corinthians, 21
        First, 134–5; Haggadic influence in, 379
        Second, 71
      to Ephesians, nature of, 23, 70
      to Galatians, 21, 135, 379
      to Philemon, 71, 134
      to Philippians, 23, 70, 154
      to Romans, 17, 19 & *n.* 1, 21, 24, 107, 129; Linus mentioned in, 283
      to Thessalonians, 21
      to Timothy, First and Second, 72, 379
      to Titus, 72, 135
      on the Church at Jerusalem, and its poverty, 120 *n.* 1, 130
    S. Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus, on his slave, 136–7
    S. Peter, First, 71, 129, date and place of writing, 8 & *n.* 1, 16, 18, 19, 51, 107, 135, 165, 166 *n.* 1, 167; to whom addressed, 107
    Seneca, 57, 69, 71; to Lucilius, 29
    Sidonius Apollinaris, 64, 66–7
    Soter, to Corinth, 104
    Theophilus of Antioch, to Autolycus, 108–9, 189
Epitaphs (*see also* Inscriptions) in the Catacombs, Characteristics of, Christian, 154–5, 307–9; Pagan, 154–5, 313–4
Equality without democracy among Early Christians, 38
Eschatologic trend of the Haggadah, 378
Esquiline Hill, church on, 262
Essenes, the, 330
Europe, Christian congregations in, mid-second century, 36

Eusebian catalogue of Roman Bishops, value of, in support of Petrine tradition, 14, 15,
Armenian version of above, *ib. ib.*
Eusebius, Bishop or Pope of Rome, 128, 147, 187–8, attempted exculpation by, of Trajan, 49; burial-place of, 243, indentified, 243
cited in support of Petrine tradition, 10, 11–12, 14; on Almsgiving, 120, 127; on high offices filled by Christians, 149; on the Plague, and on Christian charity, 127; on Pliny's correspondence with Trajan, 45; on Theophilus of Antioch, 189
Evander, home of, 87
Évangiles, Les, by Renan, *cited* on Pliny's letter, 46 *n.* 1; on Trajan as persecutor, 49
Evaristus, Bishop or Pope of Rome, burial-place of, 287
Exhortatio ad Martyrum, by Origen, 199
Exile of the Jews, in Babylonia,
Effect of, on their character, 348, 361, 371
Return from,
Rise of the Scribes on, 343, 356
Talmud, origin of, coeval with, 348
Ezra, 342, 343

Fabius, Bishop of Antioch, 105
Faith, in Early Christian Church, 39
Fame, posthumous, Roman yearning for, 59 *&n.* 1, 65
Family life, early Christian difficulties in, 140–1
Fasting, early Church, 124 *&n.* 1; Rigourist teaching on, 153
Filocalus, Furius Dionysius, inscriptions cut by, 230, fame of, 301
Fire of Rome, the great, 25, attributed to Nero, 26–7, 28, 31, 285; consequence of, to Christians and to Jews, 27–30
Martyrdom by, 28–30, 256, unusual, 275
Fish, mystic, explained, 310, 316–7 *&n.* 1
Flaccus, 3
Flavian Emperors, the (*see also* Domitian, Titus, *and* Vespasian), persecutions under, and reasons for, 39–42, 163 *n.* 1, 172, 173, 174; tombs of, 277
Flavianus, Pope, martyr, tomb of, 243
Flavius Clemens, Consul, martyred by Domitian, 41
Florus, Procurator of Judea, 330
Forgiveness of Sin, consciousness of, joy from, 155–6
Formula for reply, of possible Martyrs, 199
Fortitude under Torture, Justin Martyr on, 185; moral effect of, Lecky on, 193–4; Roman view, 193, 205
Forum, the, 86, 89
Freedmen, in Rome, 137
Freeman, Prof., on S. Petronilla's altar, at Gloucester, 279
Friedländer, —, views of, on Trajan's Rescript, 49
Fronto, 95, 145, contempt of, for Christians, 158; correspondence with Marcus Aurelius and his colleague, 63–4; letters of, on Antoninus Pius, 85, 86–7

Galatians, Epistle to, *see* Epistles
Galba, Emperor, 39, 331
Gallerius, Emperor, and the cemeteries, 237
Gallus, Cestius, siege by, of Jerusalem, 330
Gamaliel, the elder, 366
Gaul (*see also* Lyons, Vienne, *&c.*), Visigoth invasion of, 66
Gemara, the, 344–5 *&n.* 1, 346, 362, 370; basis of, 358 *n.* 1, 360, 361; exclusive spirit in, 366–8; extravagances of, 347; Rabbis of, 358, *n.* 1, 359; study of, 362–3; two versions of, 356 *&n.* 4
Generosa, catacomb of, 235, 236
Genesis, Book of, Haggadic commentary on, 377–8
Gentle School of Christian teaching, 101, 157
Gieseler, —, views of, on Trajan's Rescript, 49
Ginsberg, Dr., work of, on Massoretic notes, 363–4
Gloucester Abbey, altar and chapel of S. Petronell at, 279
Gnosticism, rise of, concurrent with Rabbinism, 326
Teachers of, classes addressed by, 112 *n.* 1
Golden Age, The, of the Church (by author), *cited*, on Saints' power over Animals, 176 *n.* 1

Good Shepherd, the, paintings of, in Catacombs, 248, 301, 308, 310, 317–20 & *nn.*
Gospel, the, at Rome, problem of its beginnings, tradition as to founder, 7, literary quotations sustaining, 8, 9 *et seq.*
Gospels (*see also under* Names), Canonical, in circulation *temp.* Antonines, 96; form of, 72; power of, 103; woman's position in, 367 & *n.* 1
Government service, Christians in, difficulties of, 141, 144, 145, 147, 148–9
Graffiti in the Catacombs, 248, 251, 259
Great Synagogue, the Men of, 339, 340
Greece (*see also* Corinth), S. Paul's missionary success in, 107
Gregory the Great, additions by, to Basilica of S. Paul, 238; and the Monza labels, 214, 228, 303–4; homily by, on S. Felicitas, 305; prayer of, for Trajan, 49; on the *Acts* of S. Felicitas, 300; on reverence for tombs of great Saints, 283
Gregory IV, Pope, 275

HADRIAN, Emperor, 104, 164, 182, 274; accession and reign of, authorities on, 75; buildings by, at Jerusalem, 77–8, 332, 335–6 *et seq.*; character of, 75, 85; cities founded by, 76 *n.* 1; death, last days, and insanity of, 82–3, 84, 335
Persecutions by, and attitude towards Christianity, 77, 81–3, 163 *n.* 2, 247, reason for, 194
Rescript of, 80; effect of, 180
Villa of, 82
Wars of, 325
Zealot revolt under, 334
Haggadah, the, 343 & *n.* 2, 344; detailed explanation of, 371 *et seq.*, 377–9; Divine inspiration claimed for, 365; edited by R. Akiba, 356; in the Exile, and after, 349–50, 351 & *n.* 1, 371 *et seq.*; Talmud popularity largely due to, 371; sources of, 372–3
Haggadic notices, nature of, 373; where met with, 358 *n.* 1, 372, 373
Haggai, the prophet, and the oral Law, 339
Hagiographa, Divine inspiration ascribed to, 365
Halachah, the, 343 & *n.* 2, 344, 349, 350; developments of, 376–7; discussions on, 360; editions of, by R. Akiba, 354–6, by "Rabbi," 358 *n.* 1; reduced to writing by "Rabbi," 372 & *n.* 1
Harnack, A., on authorship of *2nd Epistle* of Clement of Rome, 104 *n.* 2; on *The Shepherd* of Hermas, its date, 179 & *n.* 1, and various classes in the Church, 124–5; on the Martyrdom of Theban legion, 148 *n.* 1; on numbers of early Christians, inference from size of Catacombs, 105–6 & *n.* 1; on the *Pædagogus* of Clement of Alexandria, 111 *n.* 1
Hebrews, Epistle to the, 71, 72; Haggadic influence seen in, 379; on Christian Assemblies, 107; on Charity, 130; on Hospitality, 128–9; on Persecution, 165, 166
Hegesippus, list by, of Roman Bishops, 15
Heracleon, Gnostic teacher, 112 *n.* 1
Heresies and Heretics, first century, at Rome, 22, 23 & *n.* 1
Heretical teachers, second century, successful contentions of Christians with, 37
Hermas, author of *The Shepherd* (Pastor) (*q.v.*), 136 *n.* 1, 178; teaching of, 138, 179, 182–3
Herod Antipas, and S. Peter, 19 *n.* 1
Herod family, 3, 329
Herod the Great, 340
Herodians, 329
Hilary of Poitiers, on persecuting Roman Emperors, 40 & *n.* 3
Hillel, 366; attempt of, to edit Mishnah material, 351; codification work of, 366 *n.* 1; and Shammai, 339, debt to, of Rabbinism, 340
Histoire Ancienne de l'Église, by Duchesne, *cited*, 16 & *n.* 1, 179 & *n.* 1, 181, 293 *n.* 1
Histoire des Persécutions, by Allard (*q.v.*), *cited*, 19 *n.* 1, 42 *n.* 1, 48
Histoire des Persécutions, by Aubé, *cited*, on Domitian, 42 *n.* 2

Historia Monasterii S. Petri Gloucestriæ, on Royal burials near S. Petronilla's altar, 279
Histories of Tacitus (*q.v.*), the Lost, passage from (alleged) on destruction of the Temple, 331 & *n.* 1, 332
History of European Morals, by Lecky, on Christian charity, 137–8; on Christian fortitude and its effects, 193–4; on Christianity, causes of its spread, 150 & *n.* 2; on Slavery, 134, 135 & *n.* 1, 136 *n.* 1
Honorius, Emperor, 56, 252–3; and the Basilica of S. Paul, 238
Honorius I, Pope, 276; and the Basilica of S. Pancras, 235
Honorius III, Pope, additions by, to S. Paul's Basilica, 238; and the Basilicas to S. Laurence, 250
Honorius IV, Pope, the Talmud condemned by, 366
Hope, Christian, for the joy of the Future Life, 156–8, 311; evidence of Catacombs on, 268
Horace, poetic epistles of, 69 *n.* 1
Horatius and the bridge, 87
Hospitality, in the early Church, 128–9; in provision of graves, 38
Hyginus, Pope, burial-place of, 287

ICHTHUS, meaning of, 310, 316–7 & *n.* 1
Idol-worship (*see also* Incense), Ceremonial, attitude to, of Rigourist and opposite schools, 144–5, 147, 148; Old Testament attitude to, 149; Tertullian on, 203
Ignatius and Polycarp, by Lightfoot, *cited*, 40 *n.* 3
Immortality, Christian ideas on, 156–8
Imperial cultus, *see* Emperor-worship
Families, Christian members of, 110, 112, 148, 240, 241
Household, Christians in, 147
Incense, offering of (*see also* Idol-worship), test for Christians, 52, 53, 181, 194–6
Insanity of despots, *see* Hadrian *and* Nero
Inscriptions in the Catacombs (*see also* Damasus), 237, 251, 267, 268, 271, 285, 296–7, 301
Greek, 256–7, age witnessed by, 267, 268
Inscriptions in the Catacombs—(*contd.*)
"Graffiti," later, 229
Teaching of, 219, 220, 225, 307
Value of, to explorers, 229
Inspiration, claimed for Haggadah, 365; of Jewish Scriptures, Talmud view on, 364–5; of New Testament writings, 70; voice of, cessation of, 73
Invocation of Saints, not generally taught in Catacombs, 312
Irenæus, teacher of S. Hippolytus, 14, 138, 170, 251, 315, 319 *n.* 1; list of Roman Bishops by, 15; writings addressed by, to cultured classes, 111 *n.* 1
cited in support of Petrine tradition, 10, 14
on Christians at Court, 147; on the founding of the Roman Church by SS. Peter and Paul and on Linus, 15; on numbers of Christians at Rome, 104, 106, 107; on Polycarp and his memories of S. John, 73
Isaiah, the prophet, 365; book of, 53rd chapter of, by early Christian writers, 117 & *n.* 1
cited on Forgiveness of Sins, 155
Israel, Glorification of, the object of the Talmud, 345
Itineraries, Pilgrim (*see also* Names), value of, to explorers of Catacombs, &c., 209 *et seq.*, 227–8, 242, 243, 246, 247

JAMNIA, Rabbinic School at, 326, 353, 357, 358 *n.* 1
Jannes and Jambres, source of names of, 379
Jerusalem, Ælia Capitolina built on site of, 332, 335–6, result, 336–8; Hadrian's insults at, to Christianity, 77–8
Apostolic Council at, S. Peter at, 8
Communism in the Church at, results of, 120 *n.* 1, 130
Fall and destruction of, effect on Jewish nation, 22, 39, 340, 342, 346–8, 351, 353, 355, 357, 362, 368
Parties in, before first great war, 329–30
Sieges of, in order of date, by Gallus, 330, Vespasian, 331, Titus, 331–3, Severus, 337
Taken by Pompey, 3

JESUS CHRIST (*see also* Christ), Godhead of, importance of the testimony of Apostolic Fathers in regard to, 74
Jew, the, and the Talmud (Book V.), 325 *et seq.*
Jewish Encyclopædia, *cited* on the life of Rabbinic schools, 359
Jewish heroes, Haggadic legends of, 378
Learning, stimulus to, of Talmudic study, 369
National ideals as affected by War of Extermination, 78–9
Scriptures, Canonical, 361, inspiration of, 364–5
Women, disabilities of, 367 & *n.* 1, 380
Jews, attitude of, to the Gospel, reasons for, 7
Discrimination of, from Christians by Romans, progress of, 27, 30, 78, 79, 80, 92, 164
of the Dispersion, influence on, of Rabbinism, 339–41, and of the Talmud, 339 *et seq.*, 368–9
Fate of, after last wars, 325–6
History of, in Old Testament and after, 325–6, evidential importance of, to Christianity, 325, 326
Persecutions of, and martyrs of, 336, 337, 338
Preservation of, as distinct race, 326, cause of, 339, 345–7
in Rome, 3–6, 346, expulsion of, 8, 18, 25, Roman attitude to beliefs of, 3, 39, rulers favourable to, 3
Twentieth Century, distinct, still, as race, 326; influence of, 346; numbers of, 369
Wars of, the three last, story of, and of consequences, 77, 78–9, 80, 325, 329 *et seq.*, 354
Jochanan ben Zacchai, Rabbi, and his school of disciples, work of, on the Mishna, 341, 353; teaching of, 358
John, the Abbot, 228
John, the Deacon, 49
John, King, desired burial-place of, 321
John, the Presbyter, *cited* on S. Mark, 9–10
Jordani, catacomb of, 258, 260, tombs in, of sons of S. Felicitas, 259, 303
Joseph of Arimathea, 110
Joseph the patriarch, and idol-worship, 149
Josephus, on the burning of the Temple, 331
Joshua, and the oral Law, 339
Judæa, Roman rule over, 329, and revolts against (*see also* Jews, Wars of, *and* Zealots), 329 *et seq.*
Judaism, Authority and Influence of the Talmud on, 368–9
Julia Sabina, wife of Hadrian, 75
Julian, Emperor, 75, Letter from, to Arsacius, on Christian characteristics, 131; on Christian brotherliness, 123 *n* 1, 128
Julianus, Pope, martyr, tomb of, 243
Julius Cæsar, 56; favour shewn by, to Jews, 3
Julius I, Pope, 276
Jupiter, worship of, test for Christians, 194, 195
Justin Martyr, 319 *n.* 1; compared with Theophilus of Antioch, 189; martyrdom of, 94, 104, 184; teaching of, 138
on Aid to Prisoners, 130; on Almsgiving, 113–4, 119, 129; on Assemblies, 108, 113–4; on Care of the Sick, 127; on Christian fortitude, 185; on Christ's atonement, 117; on highly-placed Christians, 111; on Hospitality, 113–4, 128, 129; on the numbers of Christians, 104, 106, 107; on Persecutions, 37, 184–6; on progress of Christianity, 107
Justinian, Emperor, dedication of a church by, to a slave-saint, 136 *n.* 1; Talmud condemned by, 365
Justus, and S. Nicomedes, 255–6
Juvenal, on Domitian's unpopularity, 42 & *n.* 2; on the ideal Roman, 88; on Roman Society, 58

KABBALA, the, 360, 362 *n.* 1
Kimchi, D., famous Rabbinist, 369
Kyneburg, Abbess of Gloucester, 279

LACTANTIUS, on Almsgiving, 122; on Care for widows and orphans, 126–7; on Christian virtues, and burial of the dead, 131–2, 133; on Persecutions, 32
Lanciani, —, 236, *cited* on Basilica of S. Paul, 238

Languages, of Christian Epitaphs in Catacombs, 308
Lateran Museum, Christian sarcophagi in, sculptures on, 19 *n.* 1
Latin language, debt of, to Cicero, 58
Latin Literature, by Dr. Mackail, *cited* on Marcus Aurelius's letters, 63 *n.* 1
Law, Mosaic (*see* Torah *and* Midrash), Commentaries on, *see* Haggadah, Halachah, Midrash, Talmud, Targumim, &c.
Roman, on treatment of Christians, 32, 49
"Law upon the Lip," tradition on, 339
Le Blant, —, on the School for Martyrdom, 198 *n.* 1
Lecky, W. H., *cited*, *see History of European Morals*
Leland's Itinerary, on cult of S. Petronilla (Petronell), 278–9
Leo III, Pope, translation of S. Felicitas and Silanus by, 259, 302
Leo IV, Pope, saints translated by, 249; on tombs of Priscilla and Aquila, 262
Letter-form, of Apostolic "remains," 73; in Literature, reason of popularity, 70–1; sole O.T. instance of, 69
Letters (*see also* Epistles), by Classical writers and others, in Roman literature, 56 *et seq.*
meant for publication, 56, 61–2, 65, 66, 67, 68, not so meant, 63
others, by Christians modelled on these lines, 69 *et seq.*
Letters relating the Martyrdom of Polycarp, genuine, 81 *n.* 1
Liber Pontificalis, antiquity of, 15; value of, to Catacomb explorers, 226–7
cited on Basilica of Constantine the Great at S. Peter's tomb, 282; on S. Cecilia's tomb, 262, 293 *n.* 1, 296; on Novatus, 264; on S. Priscilla's catacomb, burials in, 266; on S. Pudentiana and her sister, 264, 265 *n.* 1
Liberian or Philocalian catalogue, *cited* in support of Petrine tradition, 14, 15; on burials in S. Priscilla's cemetery, 266; on the tomb of S. Felicitas and her sons, 301, 302–3, 304
Liberius, Pope, 301; burial-place of, 272
Licinius, 29
Lightfoot, Bp., 121 *n.* 1; on the *Acts* of the Passion of S. Felicitas, 300; on the Antonine persecutions, 94 & *n.* 2; on the authorship of the *2nd Epistle of Clement of Rome*, 104 *n.* 1; on Caius, 11; on the date of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, 178 *n.* 1; on the date of *Octavius*, 186; on *Epistolary* form as usual with the Apostles, 74 *n.* 1; on genuineness of Pliny's letter, &c., 46 & *n.* 1; on Hilary's reference to Vespasian's persecutions, 40 & *n.* 3; on Ignatius, 73, authenticity of his (so-called) Epistles, 172–3, his letter to the Roman Church, 9, his yearning for martyrdom, 175; on *The Shepherd*, of Hermas, 180, on its date and author, 179 *n.* 1; on S. Hippolytus, 11, 251–2; on S. Laurence, 254; on S. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* and S. Peter's first coming to Rome, 19 *n.* 1; on S. Peter (and S. Mark) in Rome, 10, 18; on S. Petronilla, 277
Linus, Pope, first Bishop of Rome after S. Peter, 12, 15; burial-place of, 283, 287; Jerome on, 14; "Memoria" chapel of, Papal burial-place in church on site of, 273
Lister, Jane, epitaph of, 309
Literary witness to Martyrs' histories rehabititated by De Rossi's excavations, 225, 230–1
to Numerousness of Martyrs, 209 *et seq.*
to Persecution, A.D. 64–80, 163 *et seq.*
Lombards, the, 293, 297
Lorium, country home of Antoninus Pius, 86, 87
Love as bond of Christians, 118–9
Lucilius, Seneca's letters to, 29
Lucina, Catacomb or Cemetery of, in a garden, 234, 236, 238, 239; S. Paul's burial-place, 236; S. Sebastian's burial-place, 244
Crypt of, indentification of, 245
Lucius Quietus, Roman general, 335

Lucius Verus, Fronto's correspondence with, 63
"Luminaria," in the Catacombs, 296 *& n.* 1; indication from, of crypt below, 229
Lydda, Rabbinic school of, 357, 358 *n.* 1
Lyons, birthplace of Sidonius Apollinaris, 65
Literary support from, of Petrine tradition, 9, 13
Martyrdoms at, 94, 201, 208, genuine accounts of, 81 *n.* 1
Pliny's letters read to an audience, 61

MACCABEAN dynasty, agreements made by, with Rome, 3
Maccabees, story in, like that of S. Felicitas, 258, 298
Mackail, Dr., on letters of Marcus Aurelius, 63 *& n.* 1
Madaurian persecutions, 94
Maderno, Stefano, architect, 259 *n.* 1, statue of S. Cecilia by, 294, replicas of, *ib. n.* 1
Magnesia, Epistle to, of Ignatius, 173, 174
Mahommedanism, spread of, compared with that of Christianity, 102
Maimonides, famous Rabbinist, 369; on the fathers of Rabbinism, 339
Manuals of Martyrdom, 199
Marc-Aurèle, by Renan, *cited*, 146 *n.* 1
Marcellinus, Pope and martyr, burial-place of, 266, identified, 231
Marcellus, Pope and martyr, burial-place of, 266, 272
Marchi, Father, archæological work of, 209, 224
Marcia, patronage by, of Christians, 147
Marcion, 189
Marcius Turbo, Roman general, 335
Marcomanni, war with, 95
Marcus, burial-place identified, 231
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus adopted by Antoninus Pius and successor to him, 83, 145, 245, 292; attitude of, to Christians, 33, 64, 80, 158
Character of, 84 *et seq.*, 189
Correspondence of, with Fronto, 63–4
Death of, 164
"Meditations" by, 85–6, 96–7; on Antoninus Pius, 85–6; Christian pages of, 147; on his religious ideas, 96–7
its one reference to Christians, 96–7
Persecutions by, 80–1, 162 *n.* 2, 164, 188–9, 190, 207, 208 *n.* 1, and reasons for, 81, 91–7,
Marcus Aurelius—(*continued*)
137, 194; martyrs in, 184, 258–9, 264, 266, 289, 290, 291, 298 *et seq.*, 305
Melito's discourse on, written to, 187–8
Table of succession of, 83
Marriage, Rigourist teaching on, 153
Mars, 195
Martial, poet, 59 *n.* 1; attitude of, to the old Roman virtue, 88
Martyrdom, aspiration to, checked by the Church, 154
Attraction of (*see* Ignatius), 37, 153 *et seq.*
Schools of training for, 33, 36, 145
Methods of, writers on, 197, 198 *& n.* 1 *et seq.*
Physical training for, 198, 201–3
Spiritual training, 198–201
Results, 203–5
Spirit in which faced, 205 *et prævi*
Martyres, Ad, by Tertullian, 199; on Physical training, 202
Martyrii, De Laudi, 199; on Christian fortitude in torture, 193
Martyrologies, literary sources of, in many instances rehabilitated by De Rossi's catacomb excavations, 225, 230–1; on Confessors buried in Catacomb of Commodilla, 239
Martyrology of S. Jerome, value of, to Catacomb explorers, 226
Martyrs, Apocalyptic references to, 37, 157, 167–70
Burial and burial-places of (*see* Catacombs, Cemeteries, *and* Itineraries), 285–6; burial near, desired, 312 *& n.* 1, 321–2
Formula for, of reply to judge, 199
Hermas on, 181
Hymns on, by Prudentius and others, 151–2 *& n.* 1
under Nero (*q.v.*), 267–8, 285–6
Numbers of, emphasized, 33; "small" theory refuted by archæology and literature, 82 *& n.* 1, 207 *et seq.*, 209 *et seq.*
Christian and Pagan witness to, 208
Second-century, rarity of Festivals of, 208
Seed of the Church, 196, 203
Slaves, famous, 136
Tombs of, 300 *et passim*
Traces of, in S. Peter's Memoria, 284–5
Translation of, 227, 235, 236, 266 *& n.* 1, 267, 272, 273–4, 292

Martyrum, De Glorîâ, by S. Gregory of Tours, *cited* on tragedy at tomb of SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, 261
Martyrum, De Locis SS., cited 210–11, 303; on numbers of martyrs, 212, 213, 214
Marucchi, —, archæological researches and work of, 12, 42, 234, 239, 263, 301; identification by, of S. Peter's baptistery, 12, 257
on Acilius Glabrio, 269
on Catacomb of S. Priscilla as associated with S. Peter, &c., 257, 267, 268, 270, 271, 273
on its immensity and regularity, 271
on the Domitilla Cemetery, 240
on Excavations, results of, attained and anticipated, 231–2
on Nicomedes' cemetery, reservoir in, 256
on Papal burial-places, 273
on S. Cecilia's burial-places and tradition, 293 *n.* 1, 298
on S. Felicitas's tomb, and those of her sons, 302, 303
on the Thrason Catacomb, 260
on the veneration paid to S. Laurence, 250
Massorah, the, 361 *et seq.*; Temple Torah readings preserved in, 333 *n.* 2
Massoretes, the, duties of, 361–2
Massoretic notes on the sacred Jewish texts, 362–4
Mauritanian martyrdoms, 208
Maximian, Emperor, 14 & *n.* 1
Maximin, Emperor, Persecution under, 163 *n.* 2
Meir, Rabbi, codification of Talmud by, 356; maxims of, on Women, 367
Melito, Bishop of Sardis, on Hospitality, 128; on Persecution, 32, 187–8; silent as to Vespasian, 40 *n.* 3
Memoriæ or Chapel-Tombs of Apostles, at Rome, locale of, 11, 233, 281 *et seq.*; testimony of, to Petrine tradition, 17
Mental guerdons of Christianity, 154–9
Messiah, hopes of, revolts due to, 330, 334
pseudo, revolts caused by, 336 *et seq.*, 354–5
Midoth, treatise, 358 *n.* 1
Midrash, definition of, 371
Explained, two currents in, 350, 351
Subject-matter of, 376–7
Midrashim, the, 360
Milan, Edict of, effect of, on spread of Christianity, 150 & *n.* 1
Milman, Dean, on the style of the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, 186–7
Minucius Felix (*see Octavius* by), 158
Miracles, Talmundic teaching on, 365
Mishnah (*see also* Haggadah, Halachah, *and* Talmud); basis of, 361; chief object of study, Rabbinic schools, 358 *n.* 1, how studied, 359–60, 362–3; curiosities of, 346–7; Divine inspiration claimed for, 365; evolution of, 341, 342–4; exclusive spirit in, 366–8; meaning of name, and nature of work, 341 & *n.* 1, 344 & *n.* 1, 356 & *n.* 3, 358 & *n.* 1, 365, 370; oral at first, 344; in the two Talmuds, 344–5
on Akiba's martyrdom, 355 *n.* 1; on the history of the Talmud, 339–40
Mishnah, the non-canonical, 360, 373
Mishnic Rabbis, work of, on Halachah and Haggadah, 341, 344–5, 347, 351, 352, 358 *n.* 1
Mission and Expansion of Christianity, by Harnack, 106 *n.* 1, 124–5
Mommsen, —, 331 *n.* 1, on Pagan Rome personified in Apocalypse, 169 *n.* 1; on Pliny's letter, 46
Monza Catalogue and Labels, story of, evidence of, on numerousness of martyrs, 214–5, 228; reference in to S. Felicitas and her sons, 303–4; use of, to catacomb explorers, 228
Mosaic work, oldest, in Roman church, 263
Mosaism, destruction of, 341
Moses, 348, 389, and the Law, 339
Rabbinical teaching in, 343 & *n.* 1, and on, 364, 373–4, 378
Mucius Scævola, torture of, 187
Muratorian Canon, on date of *The Shepherd* of Hermas, 178–9
Music, association with, of S. Cecilia, 294 *n.* 1
Mutual aid between Christian Churches, inculcated, 130–1
Myers, F. W., verse by, on the Atonement, 115 *n.* 1

NAAMAN, the Syrian, and Idol-worship, 149

Nævius, the augur, 87
Naples, memorial at, of S. Agnes, 256–7
Nehardea, Rabbinic school at, 357, 358 *n.* 1
Nero, Emperor, 39, 40, 41, 42 *n.* 2, 182, 183, 197, 232, 245, 269
  Death of, 207, 331
  Edict of, against Christians, 32, 54
  Fire at Rome attributed to, 26–7, 28, 31, 285
  Insanity of, 26
  Jews in Rome in reign of, 5
  Persecutions by, 10, 28, 30, 46 *n.* 1, 62, 104, 164, 167, 172, 190, 197; burnings under, 28–30; numbers involved, 28, 46 *n.* 1; S. Peter martyred during, 267, 285–6; Tacitus's references to, 62
New Testament, the, writers of, and writings, *see also under* names of Authors, and of Books, *and see* Epistles
  Assemblies mentioned in, 101
  Haggadic influences seen in, 378–9
  Inspiration of, 70
  Publication intended, Deissmann on, 71
  References in, to Persecution, 165, 166–70
  Teaching of, on Hospitality, 128–9, and on Slavery, 134–5
  Witness of, to spread of Christianity, 107
Nicholas, Pope, 226
Nicodemus and other persons of position among Early Christians, 110–12
Nicolaitan heresy, 23 *n.* 1
Nicomedia, Court of, Christians at, 147–8
Nîmes, birthplace of Antoninus Pius, 83
Nomeseus, martyr, 211
Northcote, Dr., on Early Christian faith as shown in Catacomb inscriptions, 310
"Notices" on the founding of the Roman Church, as bearing on tradition of S. Peter, 8, 9 *et seq.*
Novatus, Baths of, 264, 265
Numerian, Emperor, persecution under, 260

OCTAVIUS, Dialogue by Minucius Felix, 138, 145–6, 186–7; on Christian love, 119, 129; on Christians in high place, 111; on persecution 186–7
Octodurum, Martyrdom legend of, 148 *n.* 1
Old Testament, Books of, text of, Jewish care of, and commentaries on, 342 *et seq.*, 370, 371–9
  Christian reverence for, influence on, of the Talmud, and of Rabbinism, 327, 370 & *n.* 1
  Earliest Hebrew MSS. of, 363
  History in, value of, 325
  Letter in, the one, 69
  Teaching of, on Almsgiving, 121
Onesimus, and S. Paul, 134
Oral teaching in Rabbinic Schools, 357–60
Oratory, Church of, London, replica in of Maderno's S. Cecilia effigy, 294 *n.* 1
Origen, modified Rigourism of, 146; teaching of, 139; identification by, of Hermas, 178; veneration of, for *The Shepherd*, by Hermas, 179; writings by, on Martyrdom, 199
Osric, King of Northumbria, burial-place of, 279
Ostia, 145, 186–7, 235, 236
Ostian Way, Memoria of Apostle on, 11
Ostrian Cemetery, other names of, 255, 257, 271
Otho, Emperor, 39, 331
Overbach, —, views of, on Trajan's Rescript, 49
Ovid, poetic epistles of, 69 *n.* 1
Ozanam on Slaves in Roman Empire, first and second centuries, 135 *n.* 2

PÆDAGOGUS, by Clement of Alexandria, addressed to a cultured community, 111 *n.* 1; on Christians in the world, 146
Pagan attitude to Christianity, and its basis (*see also* Persecutions), 28, 30–4, 35, 36, 51, 77, 137, 142–3, 158–9, 164–5, 194, 196–7
  Attitude to death, 134, 313–4
  Ideas on Christian misery, 158–9
  Neglect to bury the dead, 132
  Neglect of the poor, 128
  Writings, witnessing to Persecutions (*see* Pliny's letter to Trajan), 36, and to spread of Christianity, 107

Paganism (*passim*), at core of Roman Empire, De Broglie on, 142–3; displaced by Christianity, when, and why, 150, 151
Pain, unfelt by Martyrs, testimony to, 200
Palaces, Christians in, 110–11, 147, 149
Palatine Hill, palace on, of the Emperors, 86, 89; graffito of crucifix on, deduction from, 147 & *n.* 1
Palestine (*see also* Gemara *and* Talmud), Rabbinic Schools of, 326, 344, 362–3, 373; the chief, 353, 356 & *n.* 4, 358 *n.* 1; mode of teaching at, 357–60
Roman occupations of, and Rabbinism, 340
Traces of the last "War" still seen in, 338–9
Palestinian Talmud, the, 345
Pallanteum, rebuilt by Antoninus, 87
Palm, as Christian Emblem, 310
Pantheon, portico of, robbed for Pope Urban's baldachino, 280
Papal burial-places, 243, 245, 246, 250, 266 & *n.* 1, 272–4, 283–5, 286–7, 291
Crypt, named after Pope Callistus (*see also* Papal burial-places), 234, 236–7, 242, 244 *et seq.*, 273, 287, 296, 297
Papias of Hierapolis, *cited* in support of Petrine tradition, 9, 10, 13, 14
Paschal I, Pope, 227, 273, 276, body of S. Cecilia found by, 292–4, and translated, 294, 297; Church of S. Cecilia built by, 292; translation by, of Martyrs' remains, 235, 262, 263, 295
Vision of, 293
on Forgotten Martyrs, 215 *n.* 1
Passions of the Martyrs, oft-repeated answer given in, 199
of S. Perpetua, on Insensibility of Martyrs to Pain, 200
Pastor (not *The Shepherd*, *q.v.*), 264
Patristic views of *The Shepherd* of Hermas, 179
Paul, the Deacon, 49
Paul I, Pope, 227, 273; translation by, of Martyrs' ashes, 235, especially of S. Hippolytus, 254
Paul V, Pope, 257, discoveries made by, in Vatican cemetery, 280–1 *et seq.*, 287; work of, on S. Peter's at Rome, 279–80
"Pax Romana," the, 58
Peace of the Church, the, 29–30, 203, 215, 228, 259, 263, 266, 272, 276, 302, 309
Pilgrimages to Rome after, 209, 216, 228, 251
Pentateuch (*see also* Halachah), as canon of Jewish Scripture, post-exilian days, 361; reverence felt for, 342, 343, 361; Talmudic view of its inspiration, 364–5
People, the, faith of, shown by Catacombs, 315, 319 *n.* 1; how voiced by poets and Popes, 152 & *n.* 1
Pepin, King, translation by, of S. Petronilla, 279
Pergamos, Church of, message of Apocalypse to, 168, 169–70
Peri-Stephanôn, by Prudentius, poems, subjects of, 151–2 & *n.* 1, *cited* on forgotten Martyrs, 287; on S. Hippolytus, 252–4
Persecutions of Christians, *see also* Tacitus on
Active or latent, period of, 163 & *n.* 2
Evidence on, 163 & *nn.* 1 & 2, 164 *et seq.*
Beginning, 27–9, 103, 104
Continuity, 29 *et seq.*, 80, 207, and increasing intensity, 80, 81–3
End, 29
Reasons for, 28, 30, 31, 32, 39 *et seq.*
Reference to, in *The Shepherd* of Hermas, 180 *et seq.*
Silence of writers as to, reasons for, 35 & *n.* 1, 36–7
Under the Antonines, 80, 81, 94
Decius Aurelius, 97
Diocletian, 97; severity of, 151
Flavian emperors, 39 *et seq.*
Hadrian and his successors, 79, 80, severity of, 81, 82 & *n.* 1, 83, reasons, 91–7
Nero, 10, 28, 30, 46 *n.* 1, 62, 104, 164, 167, 172, 190, 197, 285–6
of Jews, 346
Petro or Petros, as basis of name Petronilla, 277
Petro, T. Flavius, founder of Flavian family, 277
Pharisees, 329–30, after the Dispersion, 341
Philemon, S. Paul's Epistle to, 71, 134

Philip, Emperor, lenient to Christians, 97
Philip of Side, on Athenagoras's conversion, 188 & *n.* 1
Philip, son of S. Felicitas, tomb of, 259
Philippians, Epistle to, *see* Epistles
Phœbe of Cenchrea, 110
Physical preparation for Martyrdom (*see also* Schools of Martyrdom), 198, 201–3
Pilgrim Guides (*see also* Itineraries), witness of, to numerousness of Martyrs, 210
Pilgrims, visits of, to Rome, 209, 216, 226, 228, 251; favourite tombs of, 244, 260, 275, 294, 296, 297; traces of, in Catacombs, 248, 251
Pirke Aboth (Sayings of the Fathers), 339, 340, 362, 365 *n.* 1
"Pittacia," the, references in, to S. Felicitas and her sons, 303, 304
Pius I, Bishop of Rome, or Pope, 264, 265 *n.* 1; burial-place of, 287; slave origin of, 136 *n.* 1
Pius IX, Pope, and the rediscovery of the Callistus Catacomb, 246
Placidia, and the Basilica of S. Paul, 238
Plato, works of, 146
Platonia Chamber or Crypt, Cemetery of S. Sebastian, temporary tomb of SS. Peter and Paul, 237, 243; tomb of S. Sebastian near, 244
Plautius, 245
Pliny the Elder, 57
Pliny the Younger, family career and character of, 57–9
  Letters of, in general, described and discussed, 59–62; features of, 71; value of, 57
    to Tacitus, 62
    to Trajan, and information in, on Christianity, 27, 32, 33, 35 *n.* 1, 36, 45 *et seq.*, 50, 53–5, 56–7, 60 *n.* 1, 62, 75–8, 103 & *n.* 2, 106, 107, 110, 177
      Publication of, 60 *n.* 1
      Summary of, 67
      Trajan's Rescript in reply, 53–4
  Literary followers of, 64–8
    Style of, 60, Renan on, 4 & *n.* 1, 60
  Roman appreciation of, as writer, 63, 65
  Rules of, for letter-writers, 67
  Villa of, 60
  on joys of simple living, 88–9; on social status of Asiatic Christians, 110
Plotina, Empress, and Hadrian, 75
Plumbatæ, torture of, 295, 300 *n.* 1
Poems, by Early Christian writers, topics of, 151, 152 & *n.* 1
  Pagan, referring to Christianity, 158 *n.* 1
Political reasons for Roman attitude to Christianity (*see also* Paganism), 28, 30, 31–4, 39 *et seq.*
Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, 251, scholar of S. John Evangelist, 73; letters of, *see* Epistles; letters to, of Ignatius, 108, 172; Martyrdom of, letters on, genuine, 81 *n.* 1; on Christian charity, 125
Pompey, Consul, 56, first Roman ruler of Judea, 329; Jerusalem taken by, 3
Pomponia Græcina, identified with Lucina of the Crypt, 245
Pontianus, catacomb of, 211, 235
  Baptistery in, 236
Pontianus, Bishop of Rome, or Pope, martyr, tomb of, 252
Pontius, on Christian Charity at Carthage, 127
Pontus, Christians in (*see also* Bithynia), 45, 50
Pope, —, his ode on S. Cecilia, 294 *n.* 1
Popes (or Bishops) of Rome (*see under individual* Names, *see also* Papal burial-places), martyred, tombs of, with other Martyrs, 243
Poppæa, Empress, friendly to Jews, 27
Porsenna, 87
Portraits in the Catacombs, 296, 302
Portus, Bishop of, *see* S. Hippolytus
  Port of Rome, 235
Prayers of the Dead, besought by Early Christians, 309–10, 311–2
  S. Augustine on, 311, 312 *n.* 1, 321–2
  S. Cyprian on, 312
Prætextatus, catacomb of, 242, 246–8, 259, 262, 295; grave (alleged) of S. Cecilia in, 293 *n.* 1; tomb of S. Januarius in, discovery of, 301-2; S. Zeno buried in, 276
Priests as converts, 110
Priscilla (and Aquila), 110, 265–6
  Catacomb of, 213, discovery of, 230
Prisoners, Christian aid to, 130
Prophets, the, 339, books of, 361, inspiration of, Talmud on, 365; Schools of, 343, 349

Prudentius, poems of, 151, 152 *& n.* 1
Publius, Prefect of Rome, and the martyrdom of S. Felicitas, 299
Pudens, burial-place of, 264, 265, 266, house, &c., of, on the Aventine, legends connecting with S. Peter, 12, 15, 263, and with S. Paul, 265, 269; question of his family, 270; tradition, on him and his daughter, 263–5, 270
Pumbeditha, Rabbinic School at, 326, 354, 357, 358 *n.* 1, 359, 373

"Quatuor Coronati," Saints, burial-places of, 249; church of, *ib.*, relics in, of S. Hippolytus, 255
Quintilian, the earliest Ciceronian, 58
Quo vadis legend, locality associated with, 273, 274

"Rab," Rabbinic School founded by, 357 *n.* 1
"Rabbi" (Judah Ha-Nasi), famous pupil of, 357 *n.* 1; Talmud codification by, 356–7; work of, on Halachah, 258 *n.* 1, 372 *n.* 1
Rabbinic Dicta, on Inspiration, 364–5 *& n.* 1
Literature (extra-Talmudic), 360
Schools (*see also* Babylonian, *and* Palestinian), 326, 353, 354–5, 362–3, 368, 372, 373; chief study of, 358 *n.* 1; foundation of, 326, 340, 341; influence of, on Christian belief, 327, and on Christian love of Old Testament, 327; method of teaching, 357–60; work of, on the Gemara, 344–5
Rabbinism, famous scholars of (*see* Akiba, Gamaliel, Hillel, Meir, "Rab," Rabbi, Shammai, &c.), nature of, and influence of, on Christianity, 326–7, and on the Jews of the Dispersion, 339; new school of, aims of, 353, 355; spirit of, adverse to Christianity, 366 *et seq.*; traditional history of, 339–40
Rabbis, authority of, as successors to the Sanhedrim, 357; supporting Bar-cochab, 78, 336, 354, 355
Rabbis of the Dispersion, and the Law, 341, 342–3, books evolved by, 343–5
Raffaelle, painting by, of S. Cecilia, 294 *n* 1.
Ramsay, Professor, on the date of the 1st Epistle of S. Peter, 8 *n.* 1, 166 *n.* 1; on the date of S. Peter's death, 166 *n.* 1; on Epistles of Ignatius as showing contemporary conditions of Christianity, 173, 174; on Persecution of Christians as a police measure, by Rome, 31, 32; on Pliny's letter, 46; on Roman Emperor as "beast" of Apocalypse, 169 *& n.* 2; on Roman references in the Apocalypse, 169 *n.* 2
Raschi, famous Rabbinist, 369
Ravenna, 303; church of S. Vitale at, 136 *n.* 1
Regulus, tortures of, 187
Relic-hunting in the Catacombs, results of, 224
Religious faith of Jews in Rome, first century, 4–6
Renan, E., on the destruction of the Temple, 331 *n.* 1; on large numbers of Christian martyrs, 82 *n.* 1; on *Octavius* by Minucius Felix, 145, 146; on persecutions between A.D. 134 and 180, 82 *n.* 1; on Pliny's letter, 46 *& n.* 1, and on his literary style, *ib.*, 60; on *The Shepherd*, of Hermas, 180; on Talmudic influence on Christianity, 370 *n.* 1; on Trajan as persecutor, 49
Reservoirs or wells, in Catacombs and Chapels (*see also* Baptisteries), 256, 263, 264, 267, 270, 271–2
Reuchlin, —, advocate of the Talmud, 366
Rhea Sylvia, 87
Rigourist School of Christian teaching, 101, 144–5, 150–2, 153–4
Rimmon-worship, Naaman's dispensation concerning, 149
"Rock, the spiritual, that followed them," origin of reference, 379
Roman attitude to Christianity, 39 *et seq.*

Roman attitude to Slaves, and to Freedmen, 134, 137; craving for posthumous remembrance, 59 *n.* 1, 65
Christians, saluted in S. Paul's Epistle to Romans, 17, 21
Church, the, in early days, classes composing, 182, 269–70
Early importance of, 16, 17, 21
Founders of (*see also* S. Paul *and* S. Peter), 7 *et seq.*, 16–19, 22, 23, 24, 70
Generosity of, to other Churches, 131
Heresies menacing, first century, 23 &c *n.* 1
Inner life of, information on, from the Catacombs, 219 *et seq.*
Letter to, of Ignatius, 9
S. Paul's praise of, 21
Emperors, divine honours paid to, 42 &c *n.* 1, 169, 170
Empire, numbers of Early Christians in great centres of, 106
of Slaves in, first and second centuries, 135 *n.* 2
Paganism (*q.v.*), interwoven in, 142–3
Literature, dearth of, second to fourth century, 63, 67
Epistolary forms, nature of, after Cicero, 56–7
Letters in, question of influence on N.T. writers, 69–72
Renaissance, in fourth and fifth centuries, 64 *et seq.*
Myths depicted on coins of Antoninus Pius, 87, 90
Society, Dill's book on, *cited*, 89 *n.* 1; first and second century, Pliny on, 58–60; fourth century, Symmachus on, 65; fifth century, Sidonius on, 67
Tribute to Christian fortitude, 193
Rome, *see also* Popes *under* Names
Archæological investigators of, *see* De Rossi, Marchi, Marucchi, &c.
Basilicas in, third century, 112
Chief arena of Martyrdom, 175
Christians in, 16, Assemblies of, 113 *et seq.*
Behaviour of, in trial, 180–1
Estimate of, in third century, 105
Life of, 101 *et seq.*
Some of high social status, 110–12, 147, 149
Church of, *see* Roman Church
Rome—(*continued*)
Churches in, the most ancient, 263
Those holding relics of S. Hippolytus, 255
Dead, Roman and Christian treatment of (*see also* Catacombs), 131–3
Devotion to, of the Antonines, 89–90
Earliest founder of, 87
Fire of, under Nero, 25–6, consequences to Jews and Christians, 27–30
Gospel first brought to, tradition on, and literary support of the same, 7, 8, 9 *et seq.*
Hadrian's works in, 76
Jewish agreements with, under Maccabees, 3
Colonists in, and the Rabbinic School, 353
Sabbath observed in, 3
Jews in, 3–6, 346; expulsion of, 8, 18, 25; Roman attitude to beliefs of, 3, 39; rulers favourable to, 3
Literary support from, of Petrine tradition, 9, 13
Memoriæ of the Apostles in, 11
Pagan, Apocalyptic reference to, Ramsay on, 169 &c *n.* 1, 170
Attitude of, to Christianity, 39 *et seq.*, reasons for, 89, 91–7
Religion of, support to, of best emperors, 87 *et seq.*
Rule of, over Judæa, 329, 340, revolts against (*see* Wars), 329 *et seq.*, 342, 345, 353
S. Paul's stay in, 17, 21–24, and Martyrdom at, 9
S. Peter's visits to, probable dates of, and events during, 16, 18, 19 &c *n.* 1, 24, and Martyrdom at, 8; burial-place in, *see* Vatican Hill
Slavery in, 134
Temple treasures from Jerusalem at, 333 &c *n.* 2
Rome proper, burial-place in, of S. Paul, 236; Catacombs in, Itineraries on, 211–4
Rome Souteraine, by Allard, *cited* on numerousness of martyrs, 215 *n.* 1
Romulus and Remus, 87
Ruinart, —, on the Martyrdom of the Theban legion, 148 *n.* 1
Rusticus, Roman prefect, 94, 104
Rutilius Namatianus, poem of, on Christian misery, 158 &c *n.* 1

SABBATH, the, non-Jewish observance of, Rome, 3
Sabinilla, burial of S. Valentinus by, 276
Sacramentum, of Pliny, 52
Sadducees, 329, last heard of, 341
S. Abdon, burial-place of, 235, 236
S. Achilles, martyr, burial-place and tomb of, 211, 240, 241, 278; story confirmed by excavations, 230
S. Adauctus, burial-place of, 239; shrine of, 211
S. Agapetus, deacon and martyr, 301 & *n.* 1, 302; History of, 247; tomb of 243, 247
S. Agatha, 294 *n.* 1
S. Agatopus or Agapetus (*q.v.*), martyr named in tomb of S. Januarius, 301 & *n.* 1, 302
S. Agnes, 136, 294 *n.* 1; basilica of, Catacombs around, 212–3, 255; burial-place of, identified, 231; martyrdom and story of, 256; other martyrs buried with, 214–5; urn of, 258, recently seen, 257
S. Alexander, burial-place of, 303
S. Anastasia, 294 *n.* 1
S. Athanasius, veneration of, for Hermas's *Shepherd*, 179
S. Augustine, on asking the prayers of the Saints, 311, 312 *n.* 1, 322; on Burial near the Saints, 322; on S. Laurence, 254
S. Balbinus, Catacomb of, 239
S. Barnabas, Apostle, 110
S. Basilissa, *see* (*infra*) S. Hermes and
S. Blandina, slave and martyr, 136, pain unfelt by, 200
S. Calepodius, catacomb of, 234
S. Callistus, later, Pope, custodian of cemeteries, 245, 291
  Catacomb of, 242, 244–6; Crypt of S. Cecilia in, 290–1, 293 *n.* 1; discovery of, 246; Lucina area of, antiquity of, 266; Papal burial-place or Crypt in (*q.v.*), 287, 291, why chosen, 273
S. Castulus, martyr, catacomb of, 249
S. Cecilia, church of, Rome, 292 *et seq.*, her body in, 294, 297
  Crypt or burial-place of, 211, 246 & *n.* 1, 290 *et seq.*; discovery of, 231; other martyrs buried in, 214, 243; rediscovery of, 289 *et seq.*
  Martyr relatives of, 247
S. Cecilia—(*continued*)
  Story of, 290 *et seq.*
  Translation of, 294, 297
S. Chrysanthus and S. Daria, Basilica of, sons of S. Felicitas laid near, 303; site of their martyrdom, 260, tragedy at, 261
S. Chrysostom, on Almsgiving, 122
S. Clement of Rome, Pope, 104, 179 & *n.* 1, 315
  Book on, by Bishop Lightfoot, 19 *n.* 1, 121 *n.* 1, *cited* on Petrine tradition, 10
  Epistles of, *see under* Epistles
  Ordination of, by S. Peter, tradition on, 11
  Tradition on his Apostolic teachers, 73
  on Almsgiving, 121 & *n.* 1, 124, 126; on Assemblies, 108; on care for widows and orphans, 126; on Christians accused of firing Rome, 27; on Christ's Atonement, 115; on the deaths of S. Peter and of S. Paul, 171; on early persecutions, 37, 165, 170–2; on hospitality, 128; on numbers of Christians, 104 & *n.* 1, at Rome, 106; on progress of Christianity, 107; on S. Peter's martyrdom, 9
S. Constantia, church of, origin of, 263
S. Cornelius, other martyrs buried with, 214–5
S. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, and martyr, 149, 193, 315, 319 *n.* 1; and his congregation, charity of, 123, 127
  Death of, 146
  Flight of, 147
  Letter of, *ad Thibaritanos*, a martyrs manual, 199
  Teaching of, 139
  Writers on, *cited*, *see* Benson, *and* Pontius
  on Almsgiving 121–2; on Carthaginian generosity to other Churches, 131; on the Dead as concerned for the Living, 312; on Death, 155; on Hospitality, 128; on insensibility of Martyrs to pain, 200; on Martyrs' training, 198; on Persecutions (third century), 37
S. Cyriaca, burial-place of, 212, 250

S. Daria, once a Vestal, site of her martyrdom, 260, 303
S. Denis, Abbey of, ashes of S. Hippolytus at, 255
S. Domitilla, Basilica of, 257
S. Emerentiana, slave and martyr, 136, burial-place of, 255, 257, identified, 231
Catacomb of, 255
Urn of, 258, recently seen, 257
S. Epimachus, catacomb of, 249
S. Felicissimus, martyr, 301, 302; history of, 247; tomb of, 243, 247
S. Felicitas, slave and martyr, 136, 206, 272, 294 *n.* 1
Catacomb of, her tomb in a basilica over, 213, 259, discovered, 260, 302
Martyr sons of, and their tombs, 213, 248, discovered by De Rossi, 231 & *n.* 1
Story of, 258, confirmed by archæology, 259–60, 298 *et seq.*
Translation of, 259, 302
on Insensibility to pain, 200
S. Felix (and S. Adauctus), burial-place of, 239
S. Felix, cemetery of, 211, 235–6
S. Felix, son of S. Felicitas, tomb of, 259, 266, 272, 274, 302–3
S. Felix, other martyrs buried with, 214–5
S. Felix of Nola, martyr, church of, at Nola, 321; poems on, 152 *n.* 1
S. Flavian, Vision of, *cited*, on Martyrs' insensibility to pain, 200
S. Gall, "sylloge" in library of, 230
S. Genesius, martyr, once an actor, tomb of, 251
S. Gordianus, catacomb of, 249
S. Gregory Nazianzen, on unity of martyrs, 285
S. Gregory of Tours, on the group-martyrdom at tomb of SS. Chrysanthus and Daria, 261
S. Helena, Empress, cross of, laid on S. Peter's sarcophagus, 282; tomb of, 249
S. Hermes, translation of, 275
and S. Basilissa, catacomb of, 274–5
S. Hippolytus (of Portus), 11, 151; catacomb and basilica of, 250–5, 262, discovery of, by De Rossi, 251, 254
Churches dedicated to, or connected with, 254–5
Lightfoot *cited* on, 251–2
S. Hippolytus—(*continued*)
Pupil of Irenæus, 251
Relics of, 255
Statue of, 252
Tomb of, 251, Prudentius on, 252–4
Translation of, 254
S. Hyacinthus, martyr, tomb of, 275
S. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and martyr, 315; Epistle of, *see* Epistles; Martyrdom desired by, 37, 110, 154, 204–5, date of, 73
cited in support of Petrine tradition, 9, 13
on Assemblies, 108; on Christ's Atonement, 115; on his yearning for Martyrdom, 204–5; on influential Christians at Rome, 110; on persecutions, 37, 165, 172–6; on progress of Christianity, 107; on Roman generosity, 131
S. James, Epistle of, *see under* Epistles
S. Januarius, 298 *n.* 1, 304, martyrdom of, 300 *n.* 1; burial-place and tomb of, 243, 248 & *n.* 1, 301–2, discovery of, 231, veneration of, 259
S. Jerome, Catalogue of Roman Bishops by, 14, 15
on S. Agnes, 256; on S. Peter's date of arrival in Rome, 14; on *The Shepherd*, of Hermas, 179
S. John, Evangelist, 62, 251
Apocalypse of, 37, 156–7, 165, 167–70
Death of, 103, 114, 118, 165
Epistles of, *see under* Epistles
Martyrdom of, 11
Polycarp's anecdotes of, 73
Prominence of, in Asia Minor, 9
S. Justus, martyr, tomb of, 250
S. Laurence, 254, basilica and tomb of, 250, 257, martyrs buried under, 212
Churches dedicated to, 250, 254
S. Lucia, 294 *n.* 1
S. Marcellinus, *see* S. Peter and, *infra*
S. Marcus, catacomb of, 239
S. Mark, Gospel of, source and place of origin, 10, 14
Relations of, with S. Peter, 9, 10, 14, 22
S. Martialis, son of S. Felicitas, tomb of, 259, 303
S. Martin of Tours, 136
S. Martinianus, *see* (*infra*) S. Processus and
S. Matthew, Gospel of, 10, as Martyrs' Manual, 200 & *n.* 1, 201

S. Maurice and the Theban Legion, legend of martyrdom of, 148 *n.* 1
S. Maximus, Roman officer and martyr, 290, basilica of, and history of, 247; catacomb of, 259; tomb of, 242, 293 *n.* 1, 295
S. Nereus, martyr, burial-place of, 211, 240, 241, 278; story confirmed by excavations, 230
S. Nicomedes, catacomb of, special features of, 255–6
S. Oswald and S. Wulfstan, 321
S. Pamphilus, martyr, catacomb of, 274
S. Pancratius or Pancras, catacomb of, 234, 235
  Churches of, Rome, &c., 235
S. Parnel, Petronell, or Petronilla (*q.v.*), British churches dedicated to, 278–9
S. Paul, 239, 269, 273; association with, of Pudens, 265, *and see* 270
  Basilica of, 11, 17, 18, 238
  Christology of, 23–4
  Cultural status of, 110
  Epistles of, *see under* Epistles
  Haggadic influences in writings of, 379
  Hermas named by, the Hermas of *The Shepherd*?, 178
  at Rome as prisoner, 21–2, secondary place accorded by tradition and literature, 9, 11, 13–14, 17; share in founding Roman Church, 17, 22, 23, 24, 70, 104; trial of, 25, and martyrdom, 9, 10, 11, 151, 152, 170, 171; burial-places of, 211, 236, 237, 242, 243, 283; sarcophagus of, slabs of, inscription on, and other features, 237–8; sepulchre of, 242, 243
  Teaching of, keynote of, where found, 23–4; locale of, 107
  Tomb of freedman friend of, among royal graves, 241–2
  Translation of, 237
  on Almsgiving to Christian Churches, 120 *n.* 1, 130; on Assemblies, 107; on Athletic training, 198; on Charity, 122, 130; on Death, 154; on Enduring hardness, 202–3; on Hospitality, 129; on the Roman Church, 17, 21; on Slavery, 134–5; on Spread of Christianity, 107
S. Paulinus of Nola, 158, letter of, to Sulpicius Severus, on his slave, 136–7; poems of, 152 *n.* 1; question of, to S. Augustine, 312 *n.* 1, 321–2
S. Perpetua and her companions, 294 *n.* 1, martyrdoms of, 200, 208, genuine accounts of, 81 *n.* 1; pain unfelt by, 200
S. Peter, Apostle and Martyr, First Bishop of Rome (*see also* S. Petronilla), 226, 269
  Associations of, with Catacomb of S. Priscilla, 257, 263, 267, 271–4
    with S. Mark, 9, 10, 14, 22
    with Pudens, 12, 15, 263, 265, *and see* 269–70
  Baptistery of, site of, 12, 257, 267, 273
  Book on by Barnes, *cited*, 281 *n.* 1 *et seq.*
  Catacomb of, and of S. Marcellinus, 249
  Founder of Church in Bithynia, 51
  Founder of Church at Rome, tradition, archæological, and literary support to the belief, 7 *et seq.*, 16, 19, 22, 70, 104
  in Rome, 18, 24, date of arrival discussed, 8, 11, 13 *et seq.*, 16; martyrdom of, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, 151, 153, 170, 171, 233, 234, date and site of, 166 *n.* 1, 267; burial-places, and tomb of, 49, 273; Bishops of Rome buried around, 16, 23, 233 & *n.* 1, 279–88; sarcophagus of, adorned by Constantine, 237, 282–3; traditional notices of, legendary with historical basis and other, 15, 16; translation of, 237
  Quo vadis legend on, 239, 273, 274
  Teaching of, catholicity of, 367
  on hospitality, 129; on locale of Asiatic converts, 107; on persecution, 165, 166–7; on slavery, 135; on spread of the faith, 107
S. Peter and S. Marcellinus, catacomb of, 249
S. Peter Chrysologus, laudation by, of S. Felicitas, 305
S. Peter's (Basilica), Rome, 8, 233, 238; martyrs buried beneath, 210, 285; origin of, and former representatives of, 233, 238

S. Peter's (Basilica)—(*continued*)
Reason of its position, 11; site of, associations of, 28; veneration shown to, 17, 18
S. Petronilla (*see also* S. Parnel), daughter of S. Peter, 240, 241, hypotheses on, discussed, 277–8
Basilica of, 241, 278
Burial-place of, 211, 240–1, 277
Translation of, 279
S. Philip, burial-place of, 266, 272, 274, 302–3
S. Philippus (S. Philip), other martyrs buried with, 214–5
S. Prassedis (*see also* S. Pudentiana), burial-place of, 263, 264–5, 266, 268
Catacomb founded by, 270
Church of, 262, Zeno chapel in, mosaics of, 276, relics in, 262–3, well in, 263
S. Priscilla, mother of Pudens, Catacomb of, 8, 258, 261 *et seq.*, 266; antiquity, size, and importance of, 236, 240, 257, 261; associations of, with S. Peter, 12, 257, 263, 267, 271–3; baptistery in, 236; Basilica of S. Sylvester over, 257, 273; called "ad Nymphas," and why, 272; chief glory of, 257; De Rossi on, 262; evidence of discoveries in, on tradition of S. Peter as founder of Roman Church, 8, 15, 16, 42, 267, 268, 271; founders of, 270; galleries and other features of, 267 *et seq.*; inscriptions in, 267, 268, 271; notable interments in, 266, 302
Church of, 262
Original tomb of, 268
S. Processus and S. Martinianus, catacomb of, 234; story of, 234
S. Protus, martyr, tomb of, 275
S. Pudentiana (*see also supra*, S. Prassedis), burial-place of, 263, 264, 266, 268; sarcophagus of, 263
Church of, 262, antiquity and interest of, 263 *et seq.*
Part founder of S. Priscilla's catacomb, 270
S. Quirinus, Crypt of, 247; history of, *ib.*
S. Riquier, "syllogæ" in library of, 230
S. Sebastian (ad Catacombas), catacomb of, 237, 242, 243–4; memories of SS. Peter and Paul connected with, 273; story of, 244; translation of, 244
S. Sennen, burial-place of, 235, 236
S. Silanus, burial-places of, 259, 302; body once stolen, 304; translation of, 302
S. Silvester in Capite, Church, body of S. Hippolytus translated to, 254
S. Simferosa, tomb of, 250
S. Soteris, virgin, martyr, catacomb of, 239, 242, 243, 246
S. Stephen, protomartyr, 110; and S. Laurence, parallel positions of, 234
S. Suzanna, church of, 302, final resting-place of S. Felicitas, 259 & *n.* 1
S. Sylvester, Pope, Basilica erected by, 266 & *n.* 1; notoriety of, 272; Popes buried in, 272–4; saintly remains in, 213, 266 & *n.* 1, 272, 302–3; site of, 257, 266 & *n.* 1, 270, 272, 273
Burial-place of, 272
S. Symphorosa, burial-place of, 212
S. Tertullinus, catacomb of, 249
S. Thekla, catacomb of, 236, 239
S. Thomas Aquinas, 319 *n.* 1
S. Tiburtius, martyr, Basilica of, 247; relation of, to S. Cecilia, 290; tomb of, 293 *n.* 1, 295
S. Urban, martyr, tomb of, 242–3
S. Urbanus, Bishop (not of Rome), and S. Cecilia, 290, 296
S. Valentinus, martyr, 262; catacomb of, 214, 275–6, basilica in, 276
S. Valerianus, husband of S. Cecilia, martyr, 290, 292, 294 *n.* 1; tomb of, 242, 247, 293 *n.* 1, 295
S. Vitale, a slave-martyr, Church of, Ravenna, 136 *n.* 1
S. Vitalis, son of S. Felicitas, tomb of, 259, 303
S. Zeno, Basilica of, 247; burial-place of, 262, 276; Chapel of, 276, treasures in, 262–3
Saintly persons, power of, over wild creatures, 176 & *n.* 1
Saints, Communion of, Early Christian view on, 307, 309–10
Dead, invocation of, and prayers of, besought, Early Christian

Saints—(*continued*)
attitude as to, 309–10, 311, 312 & *n.* 1, 321–2
Desire for burial near, S. Augustine on, 312 *n.* 1, 321–2
Salii, College of, M. Aurelius, a member, 95
Salzburg Itinerary *cited*, 211, 212, 214, 242–3, 302, 303; date of, 227
Samuel, prophet, and the Schools of the Prophets, 349
Sanhedrim, the Great, authority of, successors in, after Dispersion, 357, 360
Sanhedrim treatise, in Talmud, 343 *n.* 1
Sarcophagi, Christian, Lateran Museum, and S. Peter's escape from Prison, 19 *n.* 1
Sardinia, exiles and martyrs in, 252
Sardis, 187
Saturninus, catacomb of, 258, 260
Schools of Martyrdom, 145; methods of, 197, 198 & *n.* 1 *et seq.*, writers on, 198 *et seq.*
of the Prophets, 349
of Teaching, Early Christian Practical, and Gentle, 101, 145–50
Rigourist, 101, 144–5, 150–2
Scillitan martyrdoms, 94, 208, *Acts* of martyrs genuine, 81 *n.* 1
Scorpiace, by Tertullian, 121 *n.* 1, a martyrs' manual, 199; S. Paul cited in, on Martyrdom, 202, 203 & *n.* 1
Scribes, the, and their duties, 341, 343 & *n.* 3, 350, 351, 361
Second Century, congregations of Christians in, locales of, 36
Seligenstadt, SS. Peter and Marcellinus' bodies at, 249
Selinus, death at, of Trajan, 87
Senate, the, decadence of, 64–5
Seneca, letters by, *see under* Epistles
Possible reference by, to Nero's burning of Christians, 29
Sentius Augurinus, a lengthy recital by, 61
Sepphoris, Rabbinic school at, 358 *n.* 1
Serenus Granianus, Rescript to, of Hadrian, on Christians, 77
Sergius Paulus, 110
Severus,—, Emperor, persecution under, reason for, 194
Severus, Alexander, Emperor, 234, 252, and the Jews, 333 *n.* 1; leniency of, to Christians, 97, and supposed Christianity of, 147
Septimius (historian), on Nero's anti-Christian Edict, 32
Severus—(*continued*)
Sextus Julius (General), operations of, in Judea, 337
Sulpicius, letter to, of Paulinus of Nola, on his slave, 136–7
on destruction of the Temple, 331 & *n.* 1, 332; on Titus's speech against Jewish and Christian religions, 39–40
Sfondrati, Cardinal, finder of the bodies of S. Cecilia, 294 & *n.* 1, 297, and of her husband, &c., 295
Shammai, a Rabbi, 366
Shema invocation, 355 *n.* 1
Shemoth Rabba, treatise, *cited*, 365
Shepherd (*Pastor*), *The*, of Hermas, 136 *n.* 1, discussed, 178–9 & *n.* 1, 180; reasons of its popularity, 183 *n.* 1; theology of, 138, 179, 182–3; on care of widows, &c., 126; on Christ's Atonement, 116; on Christian charity, 124 & *n.* 1, 125; on hospitality, 128; on the martyrs and the recusants, 36, 37; on numbers of Christians, 104; on persecutions, 180–4; on progress of Christianity, 107; on rich Christians, 111
Sicarii, the, 330
Sick, the, care of, by Early Church, 126–7
Side, 188 & *n.* 1
Sidonius, Apollinaris, family, career, and writings of, 64, 65–7, 68
Simon the Just, 339
Simon Magus in Rome, 11
Sinai, 365
Siricius, Pope, Basilicas built and adorned by, &c., 235, 241, 263, 278; burial-place of, 272
Sixtus I, Pope and martyr, 247; burial-place of, 243, 287
Sixtus II, Pope, deacons of, martyred, 302; and S. Laurence, 250, 254
Sixtus III, Basilica built by, to S. Laurence, 250; work of, at S. Cecilia's crypt, 292
Sixtus V, Pope, Church of S. Suzanna built for, 259 *n.* 1
Slavery, England's crusade against, Lecky on, 135 *n.* 1
Slaves, Christian, freed by advice of Pope Pius I, 264; position and condition of, 134 *et seq.*

Slaves, numbers of, Roman Empire, first two centuries, Ozanam on, 135 *n.* 2
Smyrna, 173
Social life and pleasures, difficulties in, of Early Christians, 141
Status of Early Christians, literary testimony to its range, 110–12
Solomon, King, 352
Soter, Bishop or Pope of Rome, 10, 131; on numbers of Christians at Rome, 104 & *n.* 2, 106, 107
Spartianus, historian, 75
Stanley, Dean, on a child's Epitaph in the Abbey, 309; on early Christianity, 318 *n.* 2, 319 & *n.* 1; on the witness of the Catacombs to the life of the Early Church, 219–20
Statius, 59 *n.* 1
Stephen, Bishop or Pope of Rome, 131
Suetonius, history by, 60, 62, 63, 269, on Christians accused of firing Rome, 27; on Domitian's persecutions, 41; on Jewish expulsion from Rome, and its cause, 18; on Neronic persecution, 62; on Vespasian's attitude to Christians, 40
Sura, Rabbinic School at, 326, 327, 344, 346, 358 *n.* 1, 359, 373; founder of, 357 & *n.* 1
"Syllogæ" of Early Christian Inscriptions, where found, 230
Sylloge Palestina, the, 215
Symmachus, Memmius, and his father's Letters, 65
Symmachus, Pope, 60 *n.* 1, Council held by, 262
Symmachus, Q. Aurelius, career of, and writings (Letters) of, 64–5, 66
Syria, Vespasian's legions in, 331

TACITUS, History of, 60, 61, 62
Lost Book of, on Titus's destruction of the Temple, 39, 331 & *n.* 1, 332
Period of, 63
Pliny's letter to, 92
on Christianity, progress of, 107; on Christians accused of firing Rome, 27; on Christians of high station, 110; on conversion of Pomponia Græcina, 245; on numbers of Christians, 103, 107
Tacitus—(*continued*)
on Jewish fecundity, 5 *n.* 1; on the persecutions, 36, 46 *n.* 1, 62, 103, 177, 208; on Roman simplicity, 88
Talmud, the, *see also* Mishnah *and* Gemara
Akiba's work on, 354–6
and the Jew (Book V.), 325 *et seq.*
Authority of, 368–9
Codification of, workers on, 356–7
Divine inspiration claimed for, 365
History of, traditional, 339–40
Influence of, on Christianity, 326, 327, 348, 370 & *n.* 1
on the Jews of the Dispersion, 339, 340, 346–7, 353, 368, 372–3
Jewish devotion to, 326, 327, 347, 350, 368–9
Materials, origin and founders of, 348 *et seq.*, 358 *n.* 1, 360
Meaning of term, 358 *n.* 1
Object of, 345
Popularity of, cause of, 371
Power of, 346–7
Recensions of, 344, 345, 359, 373
Story of, 365–6
Teaching of, differences in, from that of Christ, 366–8
Method of, 357–60
Spirituality of, 345, 352
on Inspiration of Pentateuch and of the Prophets, 364–5
on Miracles, 365
on Bar-cochab, 336–7, and on Rabbi Akiba, 355; on the last war of the Jews, 98, 338 & *n.* 1, and on destruction of the Temple, 332
Tannaim, the, 344, 358 *n.* 1
Targumim, the, 360; Haggadic pieces in, 373, excerpts from, 373–5
Tarquinius Priscus, 87
Taylor, Dr., on Rabbinic dicta, 365 *n.* 1
Teaching and doctrine, Early Christian Assemblies, 113–4; ground-work of, 115–9; as met with in the Catacombs, 220, 309 *et seq.*, 312 & *n.* 1, 315, 316 *et seq.*
Telesphorus, Pope, burial-place of, 287
Temple, the, of Jerusalem, destruction of, 22, 331–4, 340 *et seq.*, 355, 362, 368, the end of Mosaism, 341
Stones of Wailing all that is left of, 338
Treasures from, in Rome, 333 & *n.* 2, 351

Temple—(*continued*)
Women's Court in, 380
of Peace, Rome, 333 *n.* 2
Tenth Legion, at Jerusalem, 332
Tertullian, 151, 204, 315
Rigourism of, 146, 151, 153–4, 179, 182
Silent as to Vespasian, 40 *n.* 3
Teaching of, 138
Writings of:—
ad Uxor, on Hospitality, 128
Apology of, resemblances between, and *Octavius* of Minucius Felix, 186
Martyrs' Manuals, 199
Scorpiace, 121 *n.* 1, S. Paul *cited* in, 202, 203 & *n.* 1
Treatise on Idolatry, 144 *n.* 1, on training for Martyrdom, 203
cited in support of Petrine tradition, 10–11, 13, 14; on aid to prisoners, 130; on almsgiving, 120; on burying the poor, 132, 133; on Christ with the Kid, 319, 320; on Christian love, 119; on highly placed Christians, 111, 147, 149; on idol-worship, 144 *n.* 1; on insensibility of martyrs to pain, 200; on numbers of Christians in the second century, 104, 105; on penalty of being a Christian, 197 & *n.* 1, and on enduring hardness, 153–4; on persecutions, 32, 36, 37, 190–1; on physical training for martyrdom, 198, 202–3; on Pliny's correspondence with Trajan, 45, 46, and on inconsistencies in Trajan's Rescript, 55
Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, on Almsgiving, 121
Theban Legion, martyrdom of, legend of, 148 *n.* 1
Theodelinda, and the Monza Catalogue (*q.v.*), 214–5, 228, 304
Theodosius, Emperor, 253; and the Basilica of S. Paul, 238; Latin writers of his period, 64
Theophitus, Bishop of Antioch, on assemblies, 108–9; on persecution, 189–90
Thibaritanos, Ad, letter by S. Cyprian, 198 *n.* 2, 199
Thirty-nine Articles, the, 319 *n.* 1
Thrason, Catacombs of, 258, 260
Tiber, the, Catacombs beside, Itineraries on, 210–14; S. Peter's baptisms in, 11, 14
Tiberias, Rabbinic School at, 326, 327, method, study, and work at, 344, 346, 357, 358 *n.* 1
Tibur, Hadrian's Villa near, 82
Tiburtius, martyr, tomb of, 242
Tigellinus, evil counsel of, to Nero, 27
Tillemont, —, 289; on the *Acts* of S. Felicitas, 300; on the martyrdom of the Theban Legion, 148 *n.* 1
Titus, Bishop of Crete, Epistle of S. Paul to, on slavery, 135
Titus, Emperor, 85, 325; persecution under, 172, 173, 174, *and see* 207
Siege by, of Jerusalem and triumph after, 331–4, 351, 352
Views of, on Jewish and Christian religions, 39
Toleration, advocated by some Early Christians, De Broglie on, 142–3
Torah, the, 330, 341, 351, 352, 370; additions, directions, explanations made to (*see also under* Names), 343 & *nn.* 1 & 2 *et seq.*
Haggadic notices on, from Palestinian Targum, 373–5
Halachic developments of, 376–7
History of, 339
Inspiration claimed for, 343, 364
Mishnah and Gemara built up on, 361
Post-exilic reverence for, 342 *et seq.*
Schools devoted to study of (*see also* Rabbinic Schools), 326
Temple-copy of, in Rome, 333 & *n.* 2
Torre Pignatara, tomb of S. Helena at, 249
Trade, difficulties in, of Early Christians, 141
Tradition, rehabilitated by Archæology, 105, 225–6, 230–1, 239–40, 241, 289, 293, 298, 304
on S. Peter as founder of Roman Christianity, 7, 8; literary and archæological support to, 8, 9 *et seq.*
Trajan, Emperor, 110, 164, 171, 172, 182; attitude to, of Christian historians, 48–9
Characteristics of, 49–50, 55, 85
Death of, and successor, 75
Pliny's letter to, 27, 32, 35 *n.* 1, 43, 45 *et seq.*, 56, 103 & *n.* 2, 177

Trajan—(*continued*)
Pope Gregory the Great's prayer for, 49
Principles of, as to Christians, 78, 97
Rescript of, in reply to Pliny, 45 *et seq.*, 56, 57, 177; effect of, 180, provisions of, 49–50; publication of, 60 *n.* 1; Tertullian's criticisms on, 55; views of scholars *cited* on, 49
Social life of his time, 89
Zealot revolt under, 334
Translation of remains of Martyrs and Saints, 235, 236, 262, 263, 266 *&n.* 1, 267, 272, 273–4, 292, 298
Trastevere Quarter, Catacombs in, Itineraries on, 210–11
Tridentine Catechism, the, 319 *n.* 1
Trinity, Blessed, references to, in Catacombs, 316
Triumvirate, proscription of, 56
"Tropæum," the, probable identification of, 282

UBALDI, Canon of S. Peter's, on discoveries during erection of Bernini's baldachino, 281 *&n.* 1 *et seq.*
Uhlhorn, —, views of, on Trajan's Rescript, 49
Urban VIII, Pope, and the discovery of S. Peter's sarcophagus, 233 *n.* 1, 280 *et seq.*; epigram on, 280
Urbanus, Bishop (not of Rome), and S. Cecilia, 290
Urbanus, Bishop of Rome, 290
Uxor, Ad, by Tertullian, 128

VALENTINIAN II, Emperor, and the Basilica of S. Paul, 238
Valentinus, the Gnostic, 112 *n.* 1
Valerian, Emperor, favour shown by, to Christians, 147; persecution under, 243, 247, 256, 275
Vatican Basilica, the, 293
Hill, Cemetery on, 243, 272–3; beginning of, 280, 285, 286; "Itinerary" on, 210; rediscovery of, 280
Papal tombs and Crypt of, 234, 236–7, 242, 244, 245 *et seq.*; Popes buried in, 16, 233, 273, 283, 284, 286–7
S. Peter's tomb in, 16, 232, 233, 237
Gardens on, martyrdoms in, 28, 29, 30, 32; site of S. Peter's death, 267
Vatican Hill, "Memoriæ" of Apostles on, 11, 233
Vergil, poems by, 87, 88, 91, teaching of, 88, 95
Verus, son of Ælius Verus, adopted by Antoninus Pius, 83
Vespasian, Emperor, 33; attitude of, to Christianity, 39–40 *&nn.*, 207, difficulties with the Jews, 92
Persecution under, 172, 173, 174
Roman characteristics of, 85
Siege by, of Jerusalem, 330–1
Temple of Peace built by, 333 *n.* 2
Triumph of, 333
Vestibule of Domitilla Cemetery, 240
Via Appia, catacombs of, 211–12, 234, 237, 242 *et seq.*, 301
Ardeatina, catacombs of, 211, 239–42; excavations in, value of, to history, 239–40
Aurelia or Aurelia Vetus, catacombs along, 210–11, 233–5
Flaminia, catacomb of, 214, 275–6
Labicana, catacombs of, 212, 249
Latina, catacombs of, 212, 248–9
Nomentana, catacombs of, 212–3, 255–8
Ostiensis, catacombs on, 211, 236–9, 243
Portuensis, catacombs on, 211, 235–6
Salaria, catacombs of, rediscovery of, 223 *&n.* 1
Cemetery of S. Priscilla on, 12
Salaria Nova, catacombs of, 213, 258 *et seq.*, 302, 303
Salaria Vetus, catacombs of, 213, 274–5
Tiburtina, catacombs of, 212, 250–5
Vaticana, catacombs of, 210
Victor, Pope, burial-place of, 287
Vienne, martyrdoms at, 201, 208; persecution at, by M. Aurelius, 94
Vigilius, Pope, burial-place of, 272
Viminal Hill, church on, 262
Vision of S. Flavian, on Insensibility of Martyrs to Pain, 200
Vision, The, of Perpetua, 199
Vitellius, Emperor, 39, 331

"WAR of Extermination," the, 338
Wars of the Jews, the three last, 77, 78–9, 80, 325, 329 *et seq.*, 338, 354
Westcott, Bishop, on date of letter to "Diognetus," 178 *n.* 1
Westminster Abbey, epitaph of Jane Lister in, 309
Westminster Confession, 319 *n.* 1

Whepstead, church of S. Parnel at, 278
Widows and orphans, care of Early Church for, 124, 126
William of Malmesbury, Itinerary of, on Roman Catacombs, 210, 211, 213
Authority of, 210, 213, 227
Date of, 227
on S. Cecilia's tomb, 293; on S. Felicitas and her sons and their tombs, 303
Wiseman, Cardinal, 263
Women, Christ's teaching on, and the Talmudic contrasted, 367 & *n.* 1; Court of, in the Temple, 380
Worcester, two Saints of, 321
Wordsworth, W., poem of, on S. Cecilia, 294 *n.* 1
Worship (*see also* Assemblies, Idol-worship, Incense), in Christian Assemblies, Justin Martyr on, 113–4
Wulphere, King of the Mercians, 279

XIPHILIN or Xiphilinus, on Domitian, 41; on Hadrian, 75

ZEALOTS, Rabbinic masters unsympathetic to, 342, 353, 354; revolts of, and results, 330–1, 332, 334–5
Zephyrinus, Pope, martyr, 11, tomb of, 243, 245, 273, 291

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